ADELAIDE

OR, THE

CHATEAU DE ST. PIERRE.

THE MAHARAJA SERFOGI'S SARASWATI MAHAL
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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

A TALE OF THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

By MRS. EDGEWORTH.

VOL. I.

In winter's tedious nights, sit by the fire
With good old folks, and let them tell the tales
Of woeful ages, long ago betide.

SHAKSPEARE.

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ADELAIDE.

CHAP. I.

A boding silence reigns around,
Which nought disturbs—save the dull sound
Of whistl'ing winds.

AT the close of the sixteenth century, in a small neat cottage, situate on the borders of an extensive wood which bounded an estate of the Baron de Bertonville, and about two leagues south-east of the city of Coutances, in Normandy, resided the family of Antoine Durand, consisting of himself, his wife,

one son, and one daughter. Durand had formerly been a servant to the Baron, and the cottage he now inhabited belonged to that nobleman, who allowed him to live in it rent free in consideration of his past services. Possessed of an abundant share of that low cunning which too frequently usurps the place of better qualities, he had succeeded in his endeavours to gain both the favor and confidence of Mr. de Bertonville in a very considerable degree; and, although circumstances had occurred which not merely placed his character in a suspicious point of view, but were such as apparently to render his immediate discharge a measure of the highest importance; his contrition, whether real or affected, soon appeased the displeasure

of his master, in whose service he continued till within a few years of the present period. So essential to the comfort of his patron had he rendered himself, by being subservient to his pleasures and paying the most unlimited submission to his will, that it was not without much reluctance he had then consented to his quitting him; and whenever the Baron visited the Château de Bertonville, which he usually did for a few weeks every summer, his first care was always to send for Durand; who, as long as the family remained in the country, had free access to the Château. But however great the satisfaction he experienced in this privilege (which he considered an indisputable proof of his own good qualities,) his wife Margue-

rite and the little Josephine had no reason to participate his feelings; for whenever he returned from the Château their utmost endeavours to please him were unavailing. Whatever they said or did was diametrically opposite to what it ought to be. He could not relish his own homely fare after the delicacies and variety of which he had been a partaker in the Baron's kitchen, and, instead of appearing gratified by the kindnesses he received, he always returned to his family with so much discontent that they wished for nothing more earnestly than the departure of "Mr. le Baron."

One evening, when Marguerite expected her husband from the Château, together

together with her son Robert (who had on this day accompanied his father thither,) she made a large blazing fire, in hopes that the sight of it, after his walk, might cheer his spirits, and dispel the gloom which too frequently pervaded the countenance of Durand on his return home; having done which, she seated herself at work in expectation of his arrival, on one side of the chimney, while Josephine, who with her spinning wheel occupied the other, sought to divert her thoughts from the anticipation of cross looks and harsh rebukes by warbling in a high yet melodious voice several little provincial ballads, which she sung in a style of simplicity and untaught sweetness peculiar to herself.

The hour however at which he was accustomed to return elapsed, but neither Antoine nor Robert appeared. It was one of those cold frosty evenings which are often felt towards the end of September, and of which we are the more susceptible from the mornings being usually warm. Marguerite rose from her seat, and opening the cottage door, watched at it for some time in the hope of seeing her husband and son arrive, but returned at length to her fire-side disappointed and chilled by the sharpness of the air.

The evening was now far advanced, and she began to be seriously alarmed, for as the Château was not farther than a league and a half from the cottage, and

as Durand had hitherto always returned home soon after sun-set, she could not now account for his absence otherwise than by supposing some accident to have befallen him, which apprehension was founded on the circumstance of the road through which he was obliged to pass having of late been infested by a desperate band of robbers, whose frequent outrages had spread a universal terror throughout the neighbourhood, and although he had hitherto had the good fortune to escape them, it was well known that Durand had incurred the peculiar animosity of the whole banditti by having discovered and given information of one of their places of concealment to a party of the *Maréchaussée*, by whom two of the gang were there

 seized;

seized; and the alarming threats of vengeance with which some of the most daring had been heard to threaten him, obliged him to be very circumspect in his proceedings, and were also the occasion of the usual punctuality of his return. The darkness which now prevailed compelled Marguerite and Josephine to quit their different occupations, notwithstanding which they endeavoured, however, to dissipate their fears, and beguile the time by conversation, but often interrupted each other to listen for his footsteps, though in vain.

Marguerite at length could no longer sit still. She arose, brought a fresh log of wood to the fire, though it was still large and blazing, almost unconscious of

of what she did. Josephine was likewise too uneasy to notice her mother; for though the manners of Antoine were rough, sometimes even to a degree of brutality, and that he kept both his wife and daughter in the greatest subjection, yet they loved as well as feared him, and the suspense in which they now were respecting their safety, seemed to have redoubled their affection for him and his son. Josephine arose also from her seat, and began to busy herself in preparations for their supper. She spread the cloth, brought out the brown loaf and the *fromâge blanc*, the eggs and other necessary ingredients for an omelet (which was the most favourite dish of her father, and which she intended to make for him as soon as he should ap-

pear) and once more re-seated herself opposite to her mother.

They were, however, too anxious to enter again into conversation, and the silence they now preserved served only to aggravate their fears by allowing them leisure to shape their apprehensions into whatever form their imaginations might suggest, while the concomitant circumstances seemed to their alarmed minds to justify each terrific idea that presented itself. The night was by this time quite closed in; and although there was a moon, yet it was so frequently obscured by the dark and heavy clouds which drove over it, that it could yield but little assistance to those who required its light, and the faint

faint glimmering with which it occasionally shone through the window made the long intervals of darkness appear only the more awful. The wind had risen to an uncommon degree; and as it rattled the casements and whistled mournfully down the chimney, they listened to its sounds with fearful attention, and almost fancied them the groans of a person in distress.

Thus passed the dreary moments; and while a thousand conjectures harassed the mind of Marguerite, the rapid imagination of Josephine represented her father and brother sinking under the hands of the banditti, and she could no longer restrain her tears. The clock (a present which Durand had purchased

for his wife at the last fair at Coutances, and which was an acquisition of no small importance) now struck the ninth hour. Every vibration seemed to fall on her heart. She gazed anxiously at the casements, but all without was dark; chill and hollow the blast sighed among the leafless trees or groaned amid the thick firs in the wood, while the owl's cry alone broke those melancholy sounds and aggravated the apprehensions of reason by the superstitious terror which weak minds too frequently annex to the note of this "ill-omen'd bird."

CHAP. II.

The course of true love never did run smooth;
Or, if there were a sympathy in choice,
War, death, or sickness did lay siege to it,
Making it momentary as a sound,
Swift as a shadow, short as any dream.

SHAKSPEARE.

WHILE Marguerite and Josephine thus remained, their attention was roused by the clattering of horses' hoofs, which seemed to come on the wind and to be fast approaching. In silent astonishment they gazed at each other, for the lane in which their cottage was situated led to no other habitation, but terminated in

in the thickest part of the woods, through which it was impossible to pass. Before they had time to express their mutual surprise, they were startled by a loud knocking at the gate of the small garden in front.

"Holy Virgin protect us!" exclaimed Josephine, crossing herself, "who can it be at this late hour? 'Tis surely the robbers, who have murdered my father and are now coming to—"

Here she was interrupted by a second knocking, much louder than the first, and, speechless through terror, she clung round her mother, while neither durst venture to approach the door. After the pause of a few moments they were, however,

however, relieved by hearing the voice of Nicholas, one of the Baron's servants, calling them by their names, and swearing at them for keeping him so long in the cold. Josephine immediately opened the door and ran to the garden gate, where Nicholas waited, when he told her that he was sent to inform them they need not expect either Durand or Robert that night, as the Baron had sent them into the country on business, and they would not return home until the following evening; having said which, he spurred his horse, and galloped off before Josephine had sufficiently recovered from the surprise and agitation her fears had excited to permit her to make any inquiries on the subject. She now, therefore, returned

into the house, and repeated to her mother what Nicholas had said; who was equally amazed, and at a loss to conjecture what business her husband and son could be employed to transact for the Baron.

Having talked the matter over together by the fire-side till the expiring embers reminded them of the lateness of the hour, they at length retired to bed, where, being fully satisfied as to the safety of Durand and Robert, they enjoyed that sweet and uninterrupted repose which much oftener falls to the lot of the industrious and laborious cottagers than of those in a higher station.

The following day was spent by Marguerite

guerite and Josephine in their usual domestic occupations; and although the moon had risen high over the woods before Durand and his son appeared, yet, as the cause of their absence had been explained by Nicholas, they suffered no uneasiness on their account.

Marguerite had just quitted the room, and Josephine was occupied in winding the flax which her morning's industry had converted into thread, while her thoughts, by some irresistible impulse, wandered towards the neighbourhood of Coutances, when she was again surprised by the trampling of horses; but the sounds did not operate on her imagination in the manner they had the preceding evening, as she conjectured it

to

to be Nicholas, or some other domestic from the Château de Bertonville. While she yet listened she heard some one alight at the gate, and on opening the door she saw her father and brother, the latter of whom held two horses, which he led round to the small barn, which served as a stable when occasion required it, while Durand followed his daughter into the house. Josephine was all astonishment, but she dared not express her surprise nor ask any questions of Durand, as his countenance was unusually stern and gloomy. Having desired that his supper might be immediately prepared, he drew a chair close to the fire, and leaning his head on his hand, sat in profound silence and apparently absorbed in thought. At length

Marguerite

Marguerite re-entered, and in reply to her inquiries of where he had been and what had occasioned him to stay so long away, he answered, that she would know the reason sufficiently soon. He then proceeded to inform them that they must pack up all their cloaths, and be ready to quit the cottage by break of day, as the Baron could not permit them to live in it any longer, but that they were to live in a better house, to which, in pursuance of the Baron's directions, he intended to remove immediately; and that the horses which Robert had taken to the stable belonged to "Monsieur le Baron," who had lent them to him for the purpose of conveying his family.

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At this intelligence Marguerite and Josephine were equally grieved and astonished. To be obliged to leave the cottage in which she had resided during the last eight years, and where she had hoped to have passed the remainder of her days, was a circumstance of so very distressing a nature to the former, who was likewise but too well aware that all remonstrance against the will of her husband would prove ineffectual, that she wept bitterly. Josephine, whose local attachment was not so strong as her mother's, (and from that love of novelty which is incident to young people,) would probably have thought their removal a very desirable event, had it not been for *one* consideration, which so much biassed her judgment that at that

instant

instant she imagined she should prefer the cottage even to a palace in any other country. What rendered her thus partial to her present residence was its vicinity to the city of Coutances, in the suburbs of which lived a young man to whom she was much attached, and who shewed an equal degree of preference for her; but being an only son, his father, who was a tradesman, and possessed of a considerable property, had much higher views for him, and could never be persuaded to consent to his marrying the pretty little black-eyed Josephine. This opposition did not, however, diminish the ardor of their attachment, it seemed, on the contrary, rather to increase it, as is generally the case on such occasions; and as Durand and his wife favoured

favoured his suit, every Sunday and *jour de fête* was spent by Hubert at the habitation of his fair one.

When, therefore, her father declared his intention of leaving the cottage so soon, which precluded the possibility of her seeing Hubert before her departure, she began to expostulate with him, and endeavour to persuade him to postpone their journey for a few days. She was, however, very soon silenced by Durand, who, having hitherto been accustomed to the implicit obedience of his wife and daughter, was enraged at the tears of the former and opposition of the latter.

" By Saint Bartholomew," vociferat-

ed he, "if I see any more snivelling, or hear another word, I'll give you both cause to repent it. Here's a fine piece of work, truly! a man can't do as he will with his own family without being tormented by the squalling and impertinence of women; but I suppose, you young hussy," turning to Josephine, whose tears now flowed as fast as her mother's, "I suppose it's because I take you from that fellow Hubert; but I can tell you, you need not think any more about him, for you shall never have him with my consent; and I desire you both, once for all, to be ready to set off as soon as 'tis light."

Saying this he went out of the room, leaving his wife and daughter terrified at

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the vehemence with which he spoke and the fierceness of his looks.

They continued silent for some moments, when Marguerite having a little recovered herself, endeavoured to console poor Josephine, who sat leaning her head on the table, and sobbing as if her heart would break.

"Come, my dear child," said the good woman, "dry your tears before your father returns. For my own part, it grieves me to the heart to be obliged to quit my snug comfortable home to go no one knows where, and all in such a hurry too."

"Ah! mother, but my poor Hubert!" interrupted Josephine.

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"As for Hubert," said Marguerite, "if he loves thee as he ought, I'll warrant we'll manage some way of letting him know where we are; and if, as I said before, he loves thee as he ought to love thee, he'll find us out soon enough."

As she said this, Durand re-entered; and Josephine having made the omelet set it before him, and retired with her mother to prepare for their departure.

The contents of their humble wardrobe did not detain them very long; and when they had nearly completed their little parcels, Josephine having dried her tears in consequence of the hope her mother had held out to her of again seeing her dear Hubert, returned

to the little apartment which served both as parlour and kitchen, in the hope of finding her brother alone, and gaining some information from him as to this projected journey; but as she softly unclosed the door, she perceived that her father was also there; and not feeling any inclination to renew her conversation with him, she shut the door with caution, and returned to her mother. Having at length disposed of all their apparel in two small bundles, they continued together for some time, during which their sudden removal from the neighbourhood of Coutances and the extraordinary behaviour of Durand afforded them ample subject for conversation. They were, however, at length interrupted by a loud summons from

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the hoarse voice of Durand, which having quickly obeyed, he told them to follow his example, and eat a hearty meal before their departure, as they would have a long journey. Having said this, he went to hasten Robert, whom he had sent to the stable to saddle the horses; and on his return Marguerite inquired what were his intentions with regard to the furniture that belonged to them; to which he replied, that he should return to the cottage in a few days, when he would dispose of the goods to the neighbours, if they were desirous of becoming the purchasers, or otherwise at Coutances.

On hearing this the spirits of Josephine revived, as she hoped in the inter-

mediate time to prevail on her father to revoke his sentence, and also, through his means, to obtain some intelligence of her beloved Hubert.

The early dawn began now to illume the eastern horizon; and Robert having led round the horses, while Durand secured the property he left behind by locking the door of the cottage and the garden gate, Marguerite and Josephine were placed behind them on horseback, and the family soon lost sight of their humble dwelling.

CHAP. III.

I once had hopes my latest hours to crown,
Amidst these humble bow'rs to lay me down.

GOLDSMITH.

ALTHOUGH she was entirely ignorant of the road which her father intended to take, Josephine had flattered herself with the hope of passing through the city of Coutances, not that there existed the slightest probability of her seeing Hubert at that early hour, as she had not had any opportunity of apprising him before-hand of her departure; yet, on the point of being separated from

him for a length of time, perhaps for ever, she felt a degree of consolation in the idea of once more beholding even the place of his abode; she was therefore greatly disappointed on finding that Durand took a road which led in a different direction; and though previous to her departure from the cottage she had derived some comfort from the conversation of her mother, and also from the idea of her father's being prevailed on to revoke his sentence relative to Hubert, still the more she reflected the more this last hope appeared vague and uncertain; and each step that removed her farther from Coutances served only to increase the dejection of her spirits. Marguerite was equally absorbed in disquieting and painful reflection. The

sullen

sullen behaviour of her husband, added to the obstinate silence which Robert, as well as himself, preserved with respect to the place of their destination, their having been employed to transact business for the Baron, and finally, the abrupt manner in which Durand compelled them to depart, and which deprived them of the mournful satisfaction of taking leave of their friends, raised in her mind innumerable conjectures and apprehensions; and while she yet thought herself to blame for indulging these ideas, still the more she revolved the incidents of the preceding night, the more she became perplexed and uneasy. It was likewise a very severe affliction to her to be obliged to quit the neighbourhood of Coutances, which was her na-

tive place, and to which, from long and early habit, she was so much attached, that she had never formed a wish to see any other part of the country: she had likewise to regret leaving several relations and friends to whom she was much attached; and all these circumstances combining so greatly depressed her spirits that she also commenced her journey with a very heavy heart.

Durand, meanwhile, lost in thought, broke not by a single word the deep silence which at this early hour reigned around: Robert was equally mute; and thus variously engaged by their own reflections, the travellers proceeded during three or four hours; when, having reached a small inn, dignified by a sign

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on which had once been visible the royal *fleurs de lis*, and which still afforded to the weary passenger the welcome information of *bon logis à pied et à cheval*, they here alighted, and partook of such refreshment as the house could supply; which, though very bad of the kind, they relished extremely, their appetites being sharpened by the keen breeze of morning.

After having remained a sufficient length of time to give their horses the rest which was necessary, they again set forward, and pursued their journey till towards the middle of the day; when, never having travelled so far before, Marguerite and Josephine were both so exhausted with fatigue as to be

wholly unable to proceed; and at length, though not without much entreaty, they prevailed on Durand to suffer them to repose awhile beneath the shade of woods, along the skirts of which they had for some time wound their course. Here, having seated themselves on the projecting roots of sycamore and ches-nut, whose luxuriant foliage, though now animated with the rich tints of Autumn, still afforded shelter from the rays of the noon-day sun; they partook of some cold provisions with which (in addition to what he had brought away from the cottage) he had provided him-self at the inn where they had stopped to breakfast; while, at the request of Josephine, the bits were taken out of the horses' mouths, that the poor animals might

might also recruit themselves by cropping the green herbage.

As Durand was impatient to proceed, the party did not however remain here longer than the weariness of Marguerite and Josephine rendered indispensably necessary; and, preserving the same thoughtful silence that had wrapt him at the commencement of the journey, except when occasionally he answered or asked a question of his son concerning the road, Durand and his family remounted their horses, and again pursued their way.

It was not until the approach of evening that, emerging from the high road, they entered upon a wild and dreary

heath, beyond which, extensive woods and mountains, lighted up with all the purple splendour of the setting sun, closed the distant scene; when, following a kind of sheep-track, Durand now spurred his horse forward, while the spirits of Marguerite revived on being informed by her husband that the journey was nearly concluded.

At length they reached the woods, entering the deep shades of which they followed the windings of a narrow path scarcely discernible from the luxuriance of the underwood, till gradually becoming wider, it opened upon a lawn now rude and overgrown with high grass, and discovered to the astonished females the gothic features of an ancient mansion,

sion, which, as they now approached, they surveyed with mingled emotions of wonder and admiration, but the former sentiment predominated, and was increased by their not perceiving any other habitation, as they did not imagine it possible that the edifice before them could be designed for the place of their abode.

While occupied by these reflections they soon reached the mansion, at the door of which Durand and his son alighted, and assisted them to dismount, when the former, taking from his pocket a bunch of keys, applied one of them to the door, which grating heavily on its hinges, disclosed a spacious hall; and, followed by Marguerite and Josephine,

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he entered, leaving Robert without to take care of the horses.

Marguerite, whom astonishment had hitherto rendered silent, soon, however, recovered the faculty of speech, and demanded why her husband had brought her hither; while Josephine eagerly looked around, and inquired if "this fine place" belonged to "Monsieur le Baron;" to the latter of which Durand replied in the affirmative, and to the former, that they were in future to reside here, by the Baron's desire, in order to keep the house and furniture aired; also, that it was to this place the Baron had sent him the preceding day, that he might see if he liked to remove to it previous to quitting the cottage. Saying

ing this, he opened a door on the right side of the hall, and conducted his astonished companions through several long passages into another hall of smaller dimensions, the walls of which were hung with military trophies, swords, helmets, and colours, whose faded and tattered remnants, now dropping to decay, scarcely bore testimony of what they once had been. From this hall they passed into an adjoining suite of offices and servants' apartments, in the principal one of which last they found on a table a basket of provisions, which Durand informed his wife and daughter he had brought with him the first time he had visited the place; and opening which, he now set before them; while Robert, who had by this time rejoined the family,

mily, loaded the vacant hearth with faggots (which on his former excursion he had also taken the precaution of collecting amongst the surrounding woods), and striking a light, soon dispelled the gloom of twilight by their cheerful blaze.

After they had partaken of the contents of the basket and rested a short time, Durand said he would shew his wife and daughter the chamber they were to occupy, and opening a door that communicated with an adjoining small chamber which he designed for his son, they passed through this and two other chambers, the last of which he allotted to Josephine, reserving the centre apartment for himself and Marguerite; who, although the room and furniture were far

far superior to any that her late habitation contained, felt too much regret at having left her dear cottage to derive any satisfaction from this circumstance; and, unable to affect it, listened to her husband in gloomy silence. She would now, however, have returned to the hall, but this Durand would not permit; and although Josephine pleaded the fatigue she really felt, he obliged them both to follow him through a long vaulted passage, into which the last chamber opened, to ascend a staircase, traverse a gallery, and enter an apartment, to unlock which he had again recourse to his ponderous bunch of keys. Having advanced a few steps into this apartment, Durand for a moment surveyed it, and saying he had mistaken the door, turned back; but the

curiosity

curiosity of Josephine being excited by the view of an interior apartment, afforded by an open door at the extremity of that in which they were, she entreated him to allow her to look at it, and after some hesitation he complied.

These apartments were spacious and lofty, and though the tapestry hangings were now almost colourless, the velvet chairs and curtains covered with dust and cobwebs, and the rich gold lace with which they were heavily ornamented, tarnished through age and damps, they still retained an air of magnificence; and Josephine, who had never before seen any thing of the kind excepting the Château de Bertonville, which was on a smaller scale and of more modern date,

but which she had been taught to consider as "the finest place" in the whole province of Normandy, surveyed them with high admiration; but what most attracted her attention were the large pier glasses, of which there were several in both these apartments; and notwithstanding her having suffered so much from fatigue of body and grief at being separated from her "dear Hubert," yet her mind being happily tinctured with the characteristic volatility of her country, she appeared to lose the sense of the former and remembrance of the latter in the novelty of the objects by which she was now surrounded. The full length view of herself which the different mirrors afforded, delighted her, and as she passed them she curtesied to

one,

one, kissed her hand to another, and gave the *bon jour* to a third; while Marguerite, whose uneasiness had been considerably aggravated by her daughter's dejection, was pleased to find her spirits so much revived, and even the harsh features of Durand relaxed into a smile.

At length they quitted these apartments, and Durand having carefully locked the door by which they had entered them, opened one on the opposite side of the gallery, which admitted them into an apartment within which was another containing a bed. These chambers were also spacious and lofty, but their high narrow pointed casements, and dark ceilings of carved cypress wood, gave them an aspect of peculiar gloom, which

which the black damask of the chairs and bed-furniture, the lofty tester of which rose in the form of a canopy whence the curtains descended, did not tend to enliven; and though to Josephine every object here was, from its novelty, matter of curiosity, yet her imagination was too much alive to the influence of local circumstances to admit of her surveying these dismal chambers without a solemnity of sensation very unusual to her; and while her father was occupied in giving some directions to his wife respecting them, she determined to take this opportunity of speaking privately to her brother, and, leaving her father and mother together, she returned into the gallery.

The small portion of light which the gothic windows admitted allowed her, however, now that each moment increased the dusk, but an imperfect view of either extremity of the gallery, towards the centre of which were the apartments she had quitted, and fearful of mistaking her way, she hesitated whether to return or proceed, when the hoarse voice of Durand arrested her steps, and while she instantly therefore turned back to meet him, her attention was excited by a large pair of folding doors which the darkness had hitherto prevented her from observing, but which a ray of moonlight that shone upon their heavy brass locks as the planet suddenly emerged from a cloud now rendered conspicuous; and when Marguerite and Durand

Durand again joined her, she inquired of the latter to what apartments they led, and if he would not shew them to her the following morning. To these interrogations he did not at first reply; but on her repeating them, he told her they were locked, and that if she was acquainted with the dreadful circumstances that related to that suite of apartments, she would not be so desirous of exploring them.

On receiving this mysterious answer Josephine's heart sunk; and although she knew not what to apprehend, she yet felt a degree of terror stealing over her mind, such as she had never before experienced, and taking fast hold of her mother's arm, she assured Durand that

she

she was perfectly satisfied, and only wished to return to the hall. They now therefore quitted the gallery, and soon rejoined Robert, who had remained below, where the cheerful blaze of the wood fire somewhat revived the spirits of the alarmed Josephine.

CHAP. IV.

....What! gone without a word?

SHAKSPEARE.

MARGUERITE had been scarcely less surprised and agitated by the extraordinary reply of Durand than her daughter; but, unwilling to increase the apprehensions of Josephine, she endeavoured to conceal her own; and, to divert her thoughts from dwelling on the subject, desired her to assist her in preparing the beds, with which Josephine readily complied.

While they were thus occupied, Durand and Robert remained in the adjoining apartment, where they conversed together, but in such low voices, that, although the door between the two chambers was open, neither Josephine nor her mother could distinguish a word of what they said.

At length Durand entered the room where they were, and desired his wife and daughter to be expeditious; adding, that as business obliged him to return to the Château de Bertonville the next day, and that he intended setting out at an early hour, it was necessary for him (as likewise for Robert, who was to accompany him) to have some previous repose.

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On receiving this intelligence the fears of Josephine overcame the awe in which she stood of her father, and with a countenance strongly expressive of her feelings, she besought him to inform her to what he alluded in the mysterious reply he had made to her interrogations respecting the apartments at the end of the gallery; but notwithstanding the anxiety visible in her manner, and the earnestness with which she addressed him, he refused for the present to comply with her request:

"But," said he, "if you and your mother will promise me not to attempt to enter any other rooms than these and those above which I showed you last, while Robert and I are absent, I will

satisfy your curiosity when I return to-morrow; though I tell you before-hand you'll repent being so inquisitive; however, one thing more I will tell you, which is, that if you both behave as you ought to do, and that the Baron allows us to stay here, and pays us as handsomely for taking care of his house as he has promised me, I shall make a good long purse; and then, Josephine, if, as I said before, thou behavest well, I shall be both able and willing to give thee a portion that shall entitle thee to match with thy betters."

Josephine readily promised compliance with whatever he should require of her; for the idea of her beloved Hubert immediately recurred to her thoughts; and

and as the only objection his father had ever made to their union was her want of fortune, and as Durand had never been averse to it, but, on the contrary, had always appeared extremely solicitous for its taking place, she flattered herself with the hope that when the grand obstacle should be removed, he might (notwithstanding the injunction he had given her to think no more of Hubert) be also persuaded to consent.

In this, however, she argued rather from what she wished than believed; for had she allowed herself the reflection of a few moments, her experience of the obstinacy and inflexibility of her father's disposition must have convinced her that there existed but little probabi-

lity of his ever being induced to consent to what he had so resolutely decided against. But how easily do we reconcile difficulties, and deceive ourselves into a belief of what we ardently desire! Could we in reality effect our favourite plans, and surmount the various obstacles which arise in their execution with as much facility as we do in imagination, there would be little left to wish for.

The curiosity of Marguerite had not lain dormant; but as she perceived from his reply to Josephine that her husband was not disposed to satisfy it, she wisely forebore to interrogate him, and contented herself with inquiring into the particulars of what he would wish her

to

to do during his absence; after which, and that Durand had repeated his commands to both his wife and daughter not to enter any other chambers than those he had already shown them, they all retired to seek that repose in which their different emotions of grief and apprehension were shortly forgotten.

The following morning Marguerite did not awak n till a late hour, when she perceived that Durand was already gone, and having risen, she entered the adjoining chamber, where Josephine was still buried in a profound sleep. Being unwilling to disturb her, Marguerite stepped softly to the side of the bed, where she seated herself, and remained for a considerable time busily employed

in revolving the various incidents which had occurred during the last forty-eight hours, and in anxious conjectures for the future. At length Josephine awoke; but, from the strangeness of the place and the variety of ideas which crowded on her recollection, it was some moments before she could perfectly comprehend where she was. Soon, however, having drawn aside the curtains, she perceived her mother, who informed her of the departure of Durand, and then leaving her, passed through the room where Robert had slept (who was also gone) into the hall; where, being speedily followed by her daughter, they made a fire with the remainder of the wood which Robert had collected, and again had recourse to the basket of provisions,

visions, which afforded them an excellent breakfast.

During the repast Josephine took the opportunity of her father's absence to unburthen her mind to her mother, which the fear of being overheard by Durand had prevented her from doing the preceding evening. The mysterious mention he had made of the apartments at the end of the gallery dwelt heavily on her spirits; and although, from the vague manner in which he had spoken, she could attach no particular meaning to his words, yet, nevertheless, whenever her thoughts recurred to the subject she felt a degree of painful curiosity and terror which in vain she strove to suppress.

Marguerite herself was far from being easy; but as she considered it her duty not to encourage the timidity of Josephine, she ridiculed her fears, and slightly reprimanded her for giving way to them. Josephine, who tenderly loved her mother, and was chagrined at the idea of having incurred her displeasure, promised now therefore to conceal her apprehensions from the observation of Durand, and also to endeavour to conquer them.

" But indeed, my dear mother," she continued, " if you knew how very, very unhappy I am, you could not be angry with your poor Josephine. It is not only the having left Hubert, and being forced to live in this strange melancholy

choly place, believe me; for indeed my father's looks and manner terrify me almost as much as what he said last night. Surely you must have observed how odd he has been ever since he came home that night with the Baron's horses—and Robert, too, so gloomy and silent! and whenever you attempted to talk to my father, instead of seeming pleased, he looked even more stern than before."

Marguerite sighed. The alteration in her husband's behaviour had not escaped her notice, and she felt too forcibly the truth of Josephine's observations to contradict them; but as she knew not to what cause to attribute it, she concluded the discourse by desiring her not to increase the displeasure of her father

by appearing dissatisfied; adding, that perhaps something had occurred to vex him which from motives of kindness to them he forbore to mention; and that however they might both dislike their present situation, yet, as they could not alter it, it was best to endeavour to be content.

Having delivered this good advice, Marguerite felt a degree of that inward satisfaction which always accompanies the enviable consciousness of having discharged our duty; and, rising from her seat, she desired her daughter to accompany her to the apartments above, containing the black bed and furniture, "which," said she, "your father has taken a fancy to, and has desired that we may

may prepare for him against his return; but we are all so much more comfortable here, near one another, that I shall beg him not to change his room; however we must do what he desired us, so come now, that in case he returns sooner than we expect him, he may not have any cause to be displeased."

With this command Josephine complied, though not without extreme reluctance, as she dreaded the idea of going near the mysterious apartments, yet could not resolve to remain in the hall alone; she therefore closely followed the steps of her mother, who passed along the vaulted passage, and ascended the staircase that led to the gallery, which, as they now traversed, Josephine anxiously

anxiously surveyed the folding doors of the apartments which had so powerfully excited her curiosity; but though she saw nothing that could at all justify her apprehensions, for the gallery, now enlivened by the beams of the meridian sun, no longer wore the appearance of gloom which had on the preceding evening so much contributed to appal her, a degree of terror still pervaded her mind, and as she glanced her eyes over the full-length pictures with which the oak wainscot was hung, she almost expected to see some of the great personages, many of whom were arrayed in complete suits of armour, descend from the canvas. Having reached the door of the apartments they were to enter, Marguerite, with whom Durand had entrusted

ed the key, endeavoured to unlock it, which (from long disuse both the lock and key being covered with rust) she found some difficulty in effecting. At length having accomplished it, she entered; while Josephine, whose attention had been particularly excited by one of the pictures, was still earnestly gazing on the canvas, and, as she stood with her back to the door, did not observe that her mother had left her. In a few moments, however, she turned, and perceiving she was alone, was rushing precipitately into the chamber, when she felt herself forcibly held back.

At this instant the small remains of courage which she had hitherto preserved forsook her. All the apprehensions that had

had lately assailed her relative to this part of the building returned with redoubled force, and screaming loudly, she struggled violently to get free; but, notwithstanding her utmost efforts, still she was held back; and so strongly was her imagination impressed with terrific images, that she dared not even venture to look behind to see what detained her. Thus she continued for several moments in an agony of fear which can be better conceived than described, and which was still increased by her mother not coming to her assistance. Unfortunately for Josephine, Marguerite had entered the interior chamber, and pursuant to the directions of her husband, was endeavouring to remove the bed from that part of the room in which it was placed to an

opposite

opposite side, the noise of which employment prevented her from hearing the reiterated screams of her daughter. At length having succeeded in doing this, she returned to the anti-chamber, where, for the first time, she now heard her cries; and running as swiftly to her assistance as the agitation they excited would permit, she discovered Josephine, who was still screaming and covering her face with her hands. On hearing the voice of her mother she ventured to raise her eyes, and in answer to the eager interrogations of Marguerite, related to her the cause of her alarm, which she instantly perceived to be occasioned by a part of the carving of the frame of one of the pictures, which had entangled in her gown, and had thus

seemed to pull her backwards on her turning round suddenly towards the chamber which her mother had entered.

Having released and convinced her of what had been the cause of her fright, Marguerite with much difficulty prevailed on her to enter the anti-chamber; for although the occasion of her alarm had been fully explained to her, yet the impression it had made was too strong to be easily subdued; and, had her mother permitted, she would instantly have returned to the hall below.

Josephine having rested a few moments in the anti-chamber, and endeavoured to tranquillise her spirits, became at length sufficiently composed to be able

able to assist her mother in arranging these apartments according to the orders of Durand, which they had nearly completed, and were about to return, when they were startled by a sudden and violent noise, which seemed to proceed from the gallery, and reverberated throughout the whole fabric.

For several instants they were both silent and motionless, but at length recovering her resolution, Marguerite determined to endeavour to discover the cause of this second alarm, and taking the arm of Josephine, who still breathed with difficulty and shuddered with apprehension, they passed cautiously toward the door of the anti-room, on reaching which they perceived one of the

the large pictures laying on the floor in the centre of the gallery, the fall of which they justly concluded must have occasioned the noise which had thus alarmed them.

Comforted by this discovery, which dispelled her immediate apprehensions, Josephine proposed to her mother to place the picture upright against the wall, and on raising it from the floor they perceived it to be the same picture which had before occasioned so much terror to poor Josephine, and which her struggles to release herself from must have loosened from the wall. Being now, therefore, convinced that both the circumstances which had so greatly alarmed them had originated in this one cause,

they

they quitted the gallery and returned to the kitchen, where for some time they continued to discourse on the subject of the late occurrences, from which Marguerite took occasion to represent to her daughter how frequently incidents which at first appear to a heated imagination terrific and alarming, yet when properly investigated, prove equally trivial with those they had just experienced.

Toward the evening Josephine, who was unaccustomed to idleness, and who now missed her spinning-wheel, requested her mother (for she could not resolve to venture alone) to walk with her in the woods, in order to pass away the time, which appeared tedious and heavy from the want of occupation; adding,

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA SERFOJI'S

adding, that although her father had forbade them to enter any other chambers of the Château; he certainly could not object to their walking.

With this request and in this opinion Marguerite acquiesced, and passing through the several apartments, the hall and passages, they reached the great hall by which they had first entered the Château, and the doors of which opened upon the lawn; but on endeavouring to unclose them, they perceived they were locked, and the key taken away. Equally disappointed and astonished, they returned to the kitchen, where, notwithstanding her prudence and forbearance, Marguerite could not but agree with her daughter in thinking the conduct of Durand strange and mysterious.

CHAP. V.

..................He hears no music:
Seldom he smiles; and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself, and scorn'd his spirit
That could be mov'd to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
While they behold a greater than themselves.

SHAKSPEARE.

THE Baron de Bertonville, of whom mention has already been made, was the only remaining descendant of an ancient and respectable family in Normandy, which had long been distinguished by the zealous loyalty and courageous conduct of its respective branches. The father

father of the present inheritor of the title had been even more famous for intrepidity and his knowledge of military discipline than any of his noble ancestors, and, during a campaign in Flanders in which he served, so eminently distinguished himself by his gallant conduct, and rendered such signal services to his country, that at an early period of life he obtained the command of a regiment, and was publicly honoured with the applause and thanks of his Sovereign.

In a short time after this circumstance he accidentally formed an acquaintance with Mademoiselle de Villeneuve, a young lady of small fortune, but extremely beautiful, highly accomplished,

and possessed of an amiable disposition and cultivated mind. Of this lady the Baron became deeply enamoured; and, as his person and manners were uncommonly pleasing, his character, rank and fortune unexceptionable, he soon obtained the affections of his mistress, and also the consent of her friends to their union, which was soon after solemnised with great magnificence and rejoicings at the Château de Bertonville, the hereditary seat of his progenitors.

By this marriage the Baron had several fine children; but the fond hopes he had formed of them were very early blasted, for none survived the period of infancy excepting one son, the present Baron. At the age of thirteen, his father

ther placed him in the army; where, being under his immediate notice and direction, the youth acquitted himself during an engagement which shortly after took place, in a manner that seemed to promise that he would not yield the palm of glory to his valiant ancestors.

This good conduct was highly gratifying to his father, who, as early as the regulations of the army would permit, gave him a company in the regiment he commanded, flattering himself that the future character of his son would justify the rapid promotion which he hoped and intended to obtain for him. But he lived not to realise these views. Having one day, during the most intense heat

of

of summer, fatigued himself by using violent exercise, he was seized, in consequence of the exertion, with a fever of the most malignant kind, which totally baffled the skill of the physicians who attended him, and in a very few days terminated his existence.

Madame de Bertonville, who had never recovered from the shock of losing her children, and who, from the depressed state of her spirits, had been for some years in very precarious health, was so extremely affected at the almost sudden death of a husband to whom she was not more strongly united by the marriage vows than by tender affection, that she survived him but a very few months. Thus, at a period of life which

most required a father's care, the young Baron had the misfortune of losing both his parents; and, at the immature age of sixteen, found himself master of a very considerable property, without any person to controul or guide him; all his father's family being dead, and those of his mother's relations who were still living dispersed, and settled in distant parts of the country.

From this period his disposition seemed to have undergone a total change; or rather, being freed from restraint, began only now to be developed; and, from having been a general favourite with all ranks of people, so entirely unworthy did he prove himself to be of the favourable opinion which had hither-

to been entertained of him, that in a very short time he became as much an object of aversion as he had before been of esteem and regard.

Although he was not naturally brave, nor fond of exposing his person to any danger that could with any degree of decency be avoided, yet, as his pride and ambition (passions which from the earliest dawn of his character had displayed their predominancy) would not suffer him to quit the army, he continued in it for several years, without obtaining any considerable advancement, or having signalised himself by any extraordinary acts of valour which could in the least entitle him to the rapid promotion his vanity led him to expect. Disappointed

and piqued at what he termed an "ungrateful neglect" of his services, he at length resigned his commission, and retired in disgust to his paternal estate, where he continued to reside for several months, during which time he yielded without remorse to the natural arrogance of his disposition. From his dependants and domestics he exacted an implicit obedience, and exercised the most unlimited authority over all his vassals, by whom it is probable, had he used gentle methods, and endeavoured by acts of kindness to conciliate their regard, he would have been as faithfully served and obeyed from a better motive than that of fear, but by which, from the extreme severity of the Baron's deportment,

portment, they were now solely actuated.

When first these poor people heard of their master's intention of taking up his residence at the Château their joy exceeded all bounds, for the Baron had never remained there for more than a few days together after the death of his parents, since which period he had proved a very different character from what he was then thought to be; and on his arrival amongst them the artless expressions of respect and affection with which they welcomed him flattered his vanity, and soothed his perturbed spirits into a degree of self-complacency, which occasioned him to relax from the usual austerity and haughtiness of his deport-

ment; and, in a tone of affability which he rarely assumed towards his inferiors, he thanked them for their good wishes; and for the first three or four days, during which he was occupied in surveying his grounds and ordering improvements, the novelty of which employments amused his mind, he continued to behave toward them in the same obliging manner. This slight effort of condescension was, however, but as the transient gleam of sunshine which is sometimes seen to dart through the gloom of a winter's morn; for no sooner did he become familiarised with the scenes around than the natural pride and violence of his character revived, as it were, with redoubled force from their temporary suspension, and his tenants

too

too soon discovered that the Baron would never compensate to them for the loss they had sustained in the death of his father, nor prove the kind indulgent master he had been.

If the payments of his rents were delayed but for a few days, he would threaten to turn them out of their cottages and withhold their little stock; and however the tales of distress which they related in extenuation of their want of punctuality might be calculated to excite compassion, or known by him to be facts, yet these circumstances did not prevent him from frequently executing his threats.

His domestics were equally sufferers

 from

from the severity of their master's disposition. The most trivial omissions he punished with the greatest rigour; and so implacable was he in his resentments, that if once offended, no submissions, no entreaties were of any avail to appease him, or silence the torrent of opprobrious invective with which he denounced his displeasure against those who had been so unfortunate as to incur it.

With this disposition of mind it was not possible that Monsieur de Bertonville could derive much enjoyment from the pleasures and retirement of the country; and although there were several families of distinction in the neighbourhood, who, from the respect in which the memory of his parents was universally

universally held, were inclined to pay him every kind attention, yet, so much did the haughtiness of his manners and the tyranny and oppression he exercised toward his dependants, prejudice them against him, that none of them ever repeated their invitations a second time. Thus left to solitude, the Baron soon grew weary of his own reflexions; and although his conduct had not as yet been marked with any flagrant offences, yet accustomed, as ever since the evil hour in which he had had the misfortune of losing his father he had been, to yield to every impulse of passion, thoughtless of its consequence, the retrospect of his past life could not wear a very flattering appearance.

To dissipate, therefore, the troublesome reflexions which in his present solitude too frequently obtruded themselves, he determined to change the scene, and after having spent scarcely more than a twelvemonth at the Château de Bertonville, although he had at first intended to reside entirely there, he quitted it, and sat out for the metropolis, accompanied by his favourite, Durand, and one other domestic, leaving the remainder of his household and his tenants equally rejoiced (though with far greater reason for being so) at his departure as they had before been at his arrival amongst them.

Once more in the centre of gaiety, the Baron resolved to compensate to himself

himself for the penance he had performed in continuing for such a length of time in the retirement of the country, by the full enjoyment of every pleasure and amusement that suited his taste; and in pursuance of this very laudable determination, he launched into the extreme of every fashionable folly, sparing neither expense nor trouble to gratify his inclinations. Thus, in a perpetual round of dissipation and vice, he continued immersed during the space of five or six years, till at length his nearly exhausted resources compelled him to pause and to reflect. His paternal estate was not large, although with prudence it would have enabled him to live in a style suitable to his rank; but it was not such as could furnish the large supplies which

his

his present mode of life required; and, as he was wholly destitute of that true greatness of soul which would have rendered him insensible to "the world's dread laugh," and inspired him with resolution to retrench his expenses, the embarrassed state of his affairs occasioned him a degree of perplexity for which he was but little prepared.

While he still deliberated upon the means of extricating himself from the difficulties into which his extravagance had plunged him, he suffered himself to be persuaded to accompany a party of his associates to a noted gaming-house; where, having unfortunately a great run of luck, he was so delighted with his success that he no longer yielded to the uneasiness

uneasiness his circumstances had so lately occasioned; and although he had never before shewn any inclination for play (the only vicious pleasure, perhaps, from which he had abstained) he now became so eager for it, as to abandon almost all his other pursuits, all such, at least, as any way interfered with its indulgence.

The success, however, which had at first favored him did not long continue; yet, far from being discouraged by this circumstance, the eagerness with which he played seemed to increase with his bad luck. The vice of gaming was too fascinating to be withstood; and to its infatuating influence he still submitted, led on by the flattering hope of retrieving, by a fortunate throw of the dice,

the heavy losses he had already sustained, though ruin stared him in the face.

But the delusion could not last for ever. His companions began to be clamourous for the payment of the different sums they had won from him; and all his other resources being long since exhausted, the Baron now found himself reduced to the necessity of selling his estates in order to discharge these *honorable debts*; a necessity which deeply wounded his pride. The measure was, however, inevitable; and he had already nearly concluded an agreement for the sale, when he accidentally formed an acquaintance which induced him for the present to decline an expedient which his necessities could scarcely reconcile

him

him to, as he flattered himself with the hope of being thereby enabled to retrieve his affairs without submitting to such a severe mortification.

The person from whose acquaintance the Baron formed these expectations was the widow of a *fermier général*, and possessed of much wealth. At an early period of life she had been sacrificed to the wishes of an avaricious parent, and married to a man against whom the least objectionable circumstance was his being older than her father.

Although she had never been supposed to possess much sense, she however proved that she was not so deficient as she had the reputation of being, by

behaving,

behaving, notwithstanding the force which had been put on her inclinations, with the most scrupulous propriety during fifteen long years, and by her good conduct so entirely ingratiated herself into the good opinion of her husband, that at his death, which happened at the above mentioned period, he bequeathed his whole fortune to her, specifying particularly in his will that it was in consideration of her excellent behaviour.

Nearly at the same time also Madame de St. Pierre had the misfortune of losing her elder sister, whose disobedience of the commands of her father in espousing the Chevalier de Valmont, a young man of noble birth, but small fortune, had been partly the occasion of the

the early union of Madame de St. Pierre. Madame de Valmont left one daughter, a child of eleven years of age, who, by the death of her mother, became an orphan, the Chevalier having fallen in battle a few months before.

Although from the circumstance of Madame de Valmont's having offended her father by marrying in direct opposition to his commands, she had not been received by them, nor kept up any intercourse with her family; yet Madame de St. Pierre had always felt a strong affection for her sister, and on her decease she determined to adopt her orphan child; having therefore signified her intention to the gentleman to whose care she had been entrusted, and who readi-

ly

ly resigned the charge, she placed the little Adelaide at a convent within a few miles of Paris, being conscious of her own inability to superintend her education at home, and also unwilling to subject herself to the restraint which the extreme youth of her niece must necessarily impose on her. She was the more induced to give the preference to the situation in which she placed her, from its vicinity to the metropolis, in which she had a magnificent mansion, where she usually resided the greatest part of the year, and also from having in her youth been well acquainted with the Lady Abbess, and knowing her to be a woman of sound morals and an excellent understanding. To this lady, therefore, she did not scruple to entrust the

education of Adelaide de Valmont; and although the large pension she allowed for her might have insured her particular attention, yet, from her knowledge of the character of the Lady Abbess, Madame de St. Pierre depended still more on the care she would take of her from principle.

Having thus advantageously disposed of her young charge, Madame de St. Pierre, whose inclination for amusement had hitherto been entirely restrained, thought herself fully authorised, by her strict forbearance during the life of her husband, to enjoy the diversions and ways of life which most suited her taste, and having fulfilled the usual time of mourning, she began to enter into all the

gaieties of Paris. The spacious apartments, which had formerly been entirely useless, were now elegantly furnished, and the scenes of the most splendid entertainments and assemblies. It was at one of the last, to which he accidentally accompanied a friend, that the Baron de Bertonville was first introduced to Madame de St. Pierre, and having been informed of her being a very rich widow, it occurred to him that he might perhaps be chosen to supply the place of her late husband, provided he succeeded in his endeavours to render himself agreeable to the lady, the probability of which idea his really handsome person and the uncommon share of vanity he possessed left him but little reason to doubt.

Having

Having formed this design, the Baron lost no time in the execution of it, and very shortly had so entirely ingratiated himself into the favour of Madame de St. Pierre, whose weak and vain mind was not proof against the tender assiduities of the artful Baron, that, notwithstanding her *half-formed* resolution of remaining a widow, she was prevailed on to bless her enraptured lover with the promise of her fair hand.

The noblemen to whom the Baron had lost such considerable sums at the gaming table, and to whom he was still very deeply indebted, having heard of his approaching nuptials with the rich widow, no longer importuned him as they had before done for the payment of his debts;

debts; but judging it politic to secure him for their friend, professed themselves fully satisfied with a promise of payment whenever it might suit the Baron's convenience.

Of this politeness Monsieur de Bertonville did not fail to avail himself; and although on being informed of his intended marriage, his tenants were at length persuaded to furnish him with the supplies he had before so repeatedly demanded, he did not apply any part of them to the discharge of his debts; but, as the difficulties into which his extravagance had involved him had obliged him to part with his carriage and horses, and that he now wished to appear in a style suitable to his rank, that Madame de St.

Pierre

Pierre might not be ashamed of her choice, and induced to retract, he purchased a very elegant equipage and horses, and also hired several additional domestics; his favourite confidential servant, Durand, having claimed a promise the Baron had given him at the commencement of his acquaintance with the widow, that if he succeeded in his plan of operations, he would suffer him to quit his service, and also allow him to reside in a small cottage with his family on the Baron's estate, without paying any rent.

Madame de St. Pierre, although she was certainly guilty of very great imprudence in consenting to marry a man of whose character she was entirely ig-

 norant,

norant, and with whom she had been only a very few weeks acquainted, did not, however, aggravate her folly by giving him the possession of her property, but, with a degree of foresight and prudence which the Baron had little expected, reserved it all in her own power, one small estate alone excepted, the yearly produce of which she appropriated to his use. Mortified and most bitterly disappointed as the Baron was at this wise and prudent conduct, yet, as an opposite behaviour was not a probable method of inducing her to alter her determination, he judged it the best policy to dissemble; and so perfectly was he skilled in the arts of dissimulation, as entirely to disguise his inward chagrin and vexation, and effectually deceive

Madame de St. Pierre into a belief of his sincerity and disinterestedness; though, had she been possessed of any share of discernment, it is probable that she would not have given him credit for all he professed to feel on the occasion; as, in order to hide his real sentiments, he greatly overacted his part; he even affected the highest satisfaction, protested that her "charming self" was the only possession he coveted, and that were she entirely destitute of fortune still his heart would remain unchanged; he had also, he declared, pre-determined if she intended to have acted otherwise and put him into possession of all her property, not to have accepted it, as it might then have been imagined by the ill-natured and envious part of the

 world

world that her fortune had influenced him in his choice, and nothing could possibly wound his feelings more deeply than such a supposition.

With these bombastical speeches he repeatedly entertained his future bride; but aware that an impartial person might not be so easily deceived, he took care to reserve his fine sentiments for the subject of their tête-à-têtes. Notwithstanding this precaution, several of her acquaintance (to whom in the fulness of her heart the credulous Madame de St. Pierre repeated their conversations) being better informed as to the real character of the Baron, instead of bestowing the praises she thought he so highly merited, seemed rather by their looks and

and gestures to indicate a doubt of his sincerity. Some few, indeed, who felt a stronger regard for her welfare, did not scruple to declare their opinions, and advise her to consider maturely before she determined on a second marriage; but the manner in which Madame de St. Pierre received these friendly admonitions was a strong proof of the truth of the assertion, that advice unasked is never really welcome.

Instead of the good effect they had hoped their hints would have been productive of, in lessening her blind partiality and preventing her from becoming the dupe of an artful designing man, they served, on the contrary, but to increase the too favorable sentiments she

already entertained of him, and she did not hesitate to impute what she termed "the officious impertinence of *pretended* friends" to motives of envy, for which she accounted and consoled herself by the reflexion that superior merit must necessarily become an object of aversion to all narrow-minded people; and concluded by declaring, that so far from being in the least degree biassed by their wicked and unjust insinuations, she should only consider them as tributes of praise to his common worth.

This illiberal interpretation of what was really an act of friendship, lost Madame de St. Pierre the good will of all those of her acquaintance who had sufficiently interested themselves in her welfare

welfare to hazard declaring their sentiments respecting the Baron; but, in the present disposition of her mind, that was a circumstance which did not affect her; and to convince them how little she regarded their aspersions of her lover, she consented to his entreaties to hasten their nuptials, which were not to have taken place for some months, and in the short space of five weeks from the commencement of their acquaintance, the irrevocable knot was tied, and the event celebrated with the utmost splendour.

From the extreme youth of her niece, Madame de Bertonville judged it proper that the course of her studies should not be interrupted by her being present at the marriage; and although Adelaide

had anticipated much pleasure in the idea of being allowed to partake of the festivities, she was soon reconciled to the disappointment. Beneath the tender care and gentle guidance of the Lady Abbess, who loved her with a maternal fondness, her hours were devoted to improvement, and passed in that peaceful tranquillity which innocence alone can enjoy. Endowed with a clear and comprehensive mind, and an understanding far beyond her years, she listened to the instructions of her kind preceptress with an affectionate respect and attention that amply repaid all her trouble. Nor was it only in the attainment of useful knowledge that her talents were employed, she had very early exhibited a taste for music, in which the Lady Abbess ex-

celled,

celled, who having from experience found it to be not merely an innocent relaxation, but in many situations a charming resource, readily allotted a portion of each day to the improvement of her young charge in that delightful science. The harp was her favourite instrument; and as she not only devoted those hours in which the Lady Abbess instructed her, but also a great part of the time allowed for recreation, to the practice of her favourite accomplishment, she soon attained to an uncommon degree of perfection.

While Adelaide was thus employed Madame de Bertonville continued immersed in a round of gaiety and dissipation, which, with the violent partiality

she felt for her husband, so fully occupied her mind, that, from having been but a very few months before the sole object of her regard and affection, Adelaide was now seldom thought of.

This indifference toward her niece greatly rejoiced the Baron, who feared she would have proved a formidable rival to his interests, and on that supposition had conceived a strong antipathy to the amiable girl, which, however, he judged it politic to conceal; but whenever Madame de Bertonville made Adelaide the topic of conversation he endeavoured, as well as he could without openly avowing his dislike, to direct her thoughts to some other subject. In this he generally succeeded, as also in his en-

deavours to engross entirely to himself the attentions and affection of his wife. Fully persuaded of the sincerity of his attachment, and delighted with the noble disinterestedness of his conduct, Madame de Bertonville now began to regret that she had not rewarded the uncommon merit of the Baron by presenting him with all her fortune. Happily, however, she did not deem it necessary to acquaint him with this change in her sentiments, as it is probable that he would have availed himself of it, and persuaded her to repair the omission without delay. For several days she remained undecided whether she should or should not resign to him the whole of her property; but after much anxious deliberation she reflected, that although

THE TANJORE MAHARAJA ... SARASWATI MAHAL.

she was at present entirely possessed of the Baron's affections, yet, alas! it might not always be the case; and this melancholy consideration determined her to act in a manner that could not fail to please him, and which she also imagined would secure her the continuance of his tender attentions.

The plan on which Madame de Bertonville resolved was, to make a will, bequeathing all her property to the Baron; the small sum alone excepted she now judged a sufficient fortune for her niece; and having at length arranged the matter to her entire satisfaction, she lost no time in the execution of it. Immediately after it was completed she desired the Baron's attendance in her apartment, which

which summons he obeyed, and having seated himself at her side, she proceeded to express her full conviction of his attachment and his not having espoused her from any interested views, which she now, for the first time, informed him had been hinted to her. Here the Baron suddenly interrupted her to inquire who had thus dared to asperse him; but this Madame positively refused to declare, and added, that to convince him how little attention she had paid to these malicious insinuations, she would shew him a small paper she had that morning signed. Saying this, she produced and presented him with the will; which, having read, the Baron returned with a degree of satisfaction he did not however think quite proper to manifest on

the

the occasion, but, tenderly kissing her hand, he thanked her for this unmerited goodness, protesting that he valued it only as a proof of her regard, and that he could never wish to reap any benefit which must be so dearly bought as by her loss!

This very moving speech, which was delivered with suitable emphasis, greatly affected the tender-hearted Madame de Bertonville, and so entirely gained her belief, that with tears in her eyes she declared she thought it impossible to do too much for one who possessed such exalted sentiments an d so good a heart, and for the future she desired that he would consider her as his banker, and apply to her for whatever sums he might

have

have occasion. This the Baron readily promised; and thinking the immediate time a favourable opportunity, he told her he was at that moment rather embarrassed on account of some tradesmens' bills which had been sent to him the same morning, and which he had not been able to discharge, a circumstance which had occasioned him to suffer considerable uneasiness, as he could not bear the idea of distressing poor people by a want of punctuality. On hearing this, Madame de Bertonville tenderly reproached him for not having applied immediately to her; and being informed of the sum he then wanted, she presented him with a draft on her banker for double the amount. Highly delighted with his success, the

Baron

Baron (after having repeatedly testified his acknowledgments) left the apartment; and it is difficult to decide which was the most pleased, so much was Madame charmed with his behaviour and professions.

The sum of money for which the Baron was indebted to the generosity of his wife being much more than sufficient to discharge the debts he had incurred at the gaming-table, he determined to appropriate a part of it to that purpose. This resolution was not the effect of any principle of justice; but he imagined that if he were punctual in the commencement it would be the means of obtaining credit at a future period, should he again have a run of bad luck.

Having

Having therefore deposited a large share of the money which the unsuspecting Madame de Bertonville had given him for the purpose of relieving his other creditors, in the hands of his new associates, the Baron again returned to his favourite occupation with an ardour which seemed to have increased from the temporary self-denial his attendance on the widow previous to their marriage had obliged him to practise. Whenever he was prevented by company at his own house from spending his evenings at the gaming-table, he considered it as so much time lost; yet, as etiquette required the sacrifice, the entertainments Madame de Bertonville gave being mostly in return for those they had received in honour of their marriage, he thought it proper to comply;

comply; but believing himself to be perfectly secure of the good opinion of his bride, he judged it wholly unnecessary to attend her to any of the assemblies to which they were invited. Madame de Bertonville was, however, too fond of the Baron to dispense with his company without complaining; but her remonstrances were so far from having the desired effect, that, instead of procuring her more of his society, they rather occasioned him to absent himself from her more than he would otherwise have done. At first he had made it a point, unless any extraordinary circumstances happened to prevent him, always to return home from the gaming-houses before midnight; but as his tête-à-têtes with Madame de Bertonville became very

irksome

irksome to him from the troublesome reproaches and inquiries into the nature of his engagements, with which she never failed to accost him, he determined for the future to avoid as much as he possibly could being thus tormented, and frequently did not return from his nocturnal amusements till long after the morning dawn.

As the Baron, notwithstanding the success which had favoured him in the commencement, was but an indifferent player, he became, in a very short time, as deeply involved in debt as formerly; and as Madame de Bertonville began to suspect that he did not employ the money with which she supplied him for the various purposes he alledged, as occasion required,

required, he did not find it quite so easy to procure from her the large sums he wanted as her former conduct had led him to expect. This disappointment soon caused a very material alteration in his behaviour. Instead of the marked and assiduous attention she had been accustomed to receive from him, his whole deportment became as much in the opposite extreme, and at length Madame de Bertonville discovered, when too late, how much she had been deceived in the opinion she had so prematurely formed of the Baron. With sighs and tears she bitterly lamented her own want of penetration, and regretted that she had not listened to the counsels of those whom she now found to have been real friends.

Whenever

Whenever the Baron visited the Château de Bertonville, which he usually did for a few weeks every summer, he always took the precaution to invite a large party of his friends to accompany and remain with him during his abode in the country. By this means he avoided the conversation of his wife as much as if they had continued in Paris; and although Madame de Bertonville had the satisfaction of knowing where the Baron spent his time, yet she saw him even less frequently than before, his mornings being entirely dedicated to the sports of the field, and his evenings to play; as among the number of guests he invited there were always several of his most favourite associates.

Five years passed on in this manner, during which time the eyes of the unhappy Madame de Bertonville were completely opened, as the Baron kept no measures with her, but treated her with a degree of arrogance and brutality that fired her with indignation at the recollection of the former duplicity of his conduct, even more than with resentment at his present ill usage. Whenever he paid her the most common civility it was but as a prelude to a demand for money; which, as she was now but too well informed of the purposes to which he devoted it, Madame de Bertonville as peremptorily refused; and the Baron, disappointed in his views, no longer endeavoured to restrain, but gave free vent

to

to the natural acrimony and impetuosity of his temper.

On these occasions Madame de Bertonville generally spoke her sentiments, and did not scruple to declare how much she lamented the blind partiality which had induced her to disregard the warnings of her friends, and to espouse a man who had proved himself so worthless. To these reproaches the Baron retorted in terms of bitter and gross invective; and, instead of having produced any good effects by her remonstrances, Madame de Bertonville had generally but too much reason to regret the having made so vain an attempt.

From the perpetual scene of discord

in

in which she now lived, the health of Madame de Bertonville, which had always been extremely delicate, began ry visibly to decline; and having no longer any relish for the entertainments and dissipations which during the first year of her marriage had entirely engrossed her thoughts, she began to wish for the society of a female companion, the unpleasant terms on which she now was with the Baron rendering his company by no means desirable, and she therefore determined to take Adelaide from the convent to reside with her.

Having formed this resolution, she mentioned it to the Baron, not, however, without some apprehensions of his opposition, alledging as a reason the obligation

ligation she considered herself under, from the orphan state of her niece, to introduce her into the fashionable circles whenever her education should be sufficiently completed; and that although from her youth it might perhaps be as well to delay it for a year or two longer, yet, as the precarious state of her own health induced her to wish for her society, it was also an additional motive not to postpone her introduction, which it was probable would be the means of her being well married, an event she thought it her duty to endeavour to promote.

To this declaration of her intentions, (which although the pride of Madame de Bertonville would not permit her

openly to avow, yet was really meant as a request for his permission,) the Baron could not with any degree of propriety refuse his assent. It is, however, probable that the consideration of propriety would not have influenced him very much; but though he could not resolve to sacrifice to his wife those hours which he was accustomed to devote to his favourite pursuits, yet he judged it impolitic to exasperate her by refusing to allow her the company of Mademoiselle de Valmont. Having therefore obtained from the Baron a negative kind of approbation, Madame de Bertonville wrote without loss of time to acquaint her friend the Lady Abbess with her determination; and likewise to request she would inform her niece that she should

send

send for her in the course of a few days.

On the perusal of this letter the good Lady Abbess felt a degree of sorrow, which was greatly aggravated when she communicated the unwelcome intelligence to Mademoiselle de Valmont, by the artless energy of distress with which the amiable girl received it. The ever kind and indulgent behaviour of the Lady Abbess had as entirely won her affection as her respect; and although she had the highest sense of the duty and gratitude she owed to Madame de Bertonville, yet the latter sentiment glowed in her innocent heart with a much greater degree of warmth toward her worthy and valued friend the Lady Abbess.

bess. She was also much attached to several of the nuns and the pensioners, and with one of the latter, Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert, a young lady of nearly the same age and similar disposition with Adelaide, she had formed a particular friendship, and the hope of again enjoying the pleasure of her society (Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert having quitted the convent a few months before) was the only circumstance that could in the least reconcile her to the disagreeable necessity she was under of parting from the other companions of her youth, and also those scenes to which from long and early habit she was greatly attached. In the same convent with Madame de Valmont (the mother of Adelaide) the Lady Ab-

bess

bess had been educated; and although after their educations were completed they had seldom met, (the life of one being devoted to religious retirement and the other engaged in the pursuits of the world,) yet they had always entertained the strongest friendship for each other. This circumstance, together with the unfortunate fate of Madame de Valmont, had formed strong claims for Adelaide on the benevolent heart of the good Lady Abbess, which the engaging manners and amiable disposition of her young charge soon strengthened and confirmed into a maternal fondness; and notwithstanding that she had for a considerable length of time been in expectation of losing her, yet she could not see her depart without feeling the deepest concern.

At length the dreaded day arrived which was to separate Adelaide from her beloved friends; and although she had endeavoured to arm herself with resolution, she could neither repress nor disguise her grief on being summoned to attend Madame de Bertonville in the parlour. With streaming eyes, and a countenance strongly expressive of the anguish of her mind, she took leave of the nuns and her young friends; but on approaching the Lady Abbess she could no longer restrain her grief, and sobbing aloud, threw herself into the fond arms which were open to receive her. After having tenderly and repeatedly embraced her, the Lady Abbess in a whisper desired her not to give way to such immoderate sorrow, as it would certainly be displeasing to her aunt. Adelaide endeavoured

deavoured to reply, but her heart was too full for utterance; and pressing the hand of her kind friend to her lips in token of obedience, she followed the steps of Madame de Bertonville, who had already seated herself in the carriage.

In compliance with the desire of her dear Lady Abbess, Adelaide determined to disguise as much as possible the load of grief with which she was oppressed; and although the effort was painful, yet she succeeded so well in her endeavours, that during their short journey Madame de Bertonville had no reason to be displeased. On arriving at the Hotel de Bertonville she requested her aunt to dispense with her attendance for that

 evening,

evening, and, under the pretence of fatigue, obtained permission to retire to her apartment. Released from the restraint which the presence of Madame de Bertonville had imposed on her, Adelaide yielded to a flood of tears; till at length the agitation of her spirits, and the fatigue she suffered from not having been accustomed to travelling, compelled her to seek in repose a temporary forgetfulness of sorrow.

The following morning she awoke much refreshed by the sound and tranquil slumbers in which she had passed the night; and having renewed the resolution she had formed the preceding day, to endeavour to conceal the regret she felt at leaving her friends in the con-

vent,

vent, she prepared to attend the breakfast table of her aunt, to which she was soon summoned.

On entering the apartment where Madame de Bertonville was, she inquired how Adelaide had rested with a degree of kindness, which, in the present situation of her mind, was highly gratifying to her, and which she determined to repay by the most respectful attention.

After they had finished their breakfast, Madame proposed taking an airing, to which Adelaide having assented, the carriage was ordered, and they drove to the Boulevards. From thence they passed through most of the principal streets and squares; and the beauty of

the public edifices, and novelty and variety which her airing afforded, by diverting her thoughts from the subject on which they had dwelt, contributed to restore the mind of Adelaide to its wonted cheerfulness even more than her own endeavours.

On their return home, Madame de Bertonville inquired for the Baron, and was informed that he had set off that morning for the country seat of one of his friends, which was at the distance of several leagues from Paris. On hearing this Adelaide felt a kind of reprieve, as the solitude in which she had been educated had greatly increased the natural timidity of her manners; and although she acquitted herself with great elegance

and

and grace, yet she always suffered so much on her first introduction to strangers, that, never having seen Monsieur de Bertonville, his absenting himself was a matter of much satisfaction to her.

The remainder of the day was spent at home; and though the conversation of her aunt was very different from that to which Adelaide had been accustomed to listen from her dear Lady Abbess, yet the warmth of affection she testified toward her, the affability of her manners, and withal an air of melancholy which pervaded her countenance, greatly attached and interested the benevolent heart of Adelaide.

If Adelaide was thus pleas edwith her aunt, that lady was no less so with her. The perpetual domestic broils and unpleasant scenes in which Madame de Bertonville had been engaged, had so totally engrossed her thoughts, that instead of going occasionally to see her niece and visit the Lady Abbess, she had contented herself with merely sending to inquire for them; and until the morning on which she brought her from the convent, she had not seen her for the space of three years, which length of time had made a very considerable alteration and improvement both in her person and manners; and although she certainly could not with truth be termed a regular beauty, yet it was impossible to see without admir-

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ing her. To a form of the most exact symmetry, she united a countenance irresistibly pleasing, in the varied expression of which might quickly be discerned each sentiment of her heart. Her dark blue eyes were full of intelligence and vivacity, though the fire of their expression was chastened by modesty and mildness. Her mouth was small and beautiful, and when she smiled, her countenance was such as painters endeavor to depict for Hebe. Nature had endowed her with an intelligent mind and sound understanding, which had been highly cultivated and improved by the assiduous care of the Lady Abbess; and though her manners had not received that degree of polish which can only be acquired by frequenting the fashionable

fashionable circles, yet they were so strongly expressive of her wish to please, (not from a desire of admiration, but from the pure and genuine sentiments of benevolence which animated her breast,) that they could not fail of their effect; while the grace which accompanied her every look and action was rather increased than diminished by the bashfulness and timidity which tinged her cheeks with blushes.

Madame de Bertonville, who though a very weak and vain woman, was yet really possessed of a great share of good nature, felt an absolute remorse of conscience, when she considered how much she had neglected this amiable girl, and how easily she had suffered herself to be persuaded

suaded to do so by the artifices of the Baron; while the respectful tenderness with which Adelaide behaved toward her, and the innumerable little attentions which marked her conduct, (attentions Madame de Bertonville had been little accustomed to receive,) considerably aggravated the unpleasant sensations she experienced, and the strong resemblance she perceived in her niece to her unfortunate mother Madame de Valmont, who had always been the favorite sister of Madame de Bertonville, contributed greatly to increase the lively affection she now felt for her.

Whatever were the sentiments and prepossessions of Madame de Bertonville, they were always violent and in the

the extreme; though from the weakness of her understanding and her easy credulous disposition, it was by no means a difficult matter to persuade her to renounce her own opinions and adopt those of others. The unkind and impolitic behaviour of her husband, had long since deprived him of her regard; and her own conduct, previous to her marriage, having entirely estranged those friends who had hazarded and incurred her displeasure by a disclosure of their sentiments respecting her intended union with the Baron, and the opinion generally entertained of his character, she soon, from having no object to whom she could attach herself, became equally indifferent to all around her; and every sentiment of tenderness and affection

affection was absorbed in the consciousness of those sorrows, which received an additional poignancy from the reflection of their being the consequence of her own imprudence. Unfortunately for Madame de Bertonville she was not of a turn of mind to derive any consolation from books; and having been married at a very early period of life, she had neglected to cultivate those accomplishments, which might in some degree have beguiled the sense of affliction. All these circumstances combined, rendered her completely wretched; notwithstanding her being possessed of a large fortune, and what the world in general considers essential to happiness, and in addition to all, she had espoused

a man to whom she was very strongly attached; but so far from having contributed to her happiness, this union had embittered her comforts, and proved the source of real and lasting misery.

When first she formed the design of taking her niece from the convent to reside with her, it was not so much from motives of regard toward her, as from the desire of having a companion whose attentions and conversation might beguile those hours, which from her various sources of vexation and indifferent state of health, now became heavy and almost insupportable: but the amiable disposition and engaging manners of Adelaide soon rekindled in the bosom

bosom of Madame de Bertonville those sparks of affection which had so long been extinguished; and while each hour served to increase her attachment to her niece, the contrast of the Baron's behaviour appeared in stronger colours. Several days elapsed without his having yet made his appearance, during which Madame de Bertonville and Adelaide remained at home, where the gentle attentions and various accomplishments of the latter, seemed to renovate the health and spirits of her aunt, by preventing her thoughts from dwelling on circumstances now past beyond recall!

Meanwhile, Adelaide was no less pleased

pleased and contented, having received a long and affectionate letter from her dear Lady Abbess.

CHAP. VI.

The hues of bliss more brightly glow,
Chastis'd by sabler tints of woe,
And blended form with artful strife,
The strength and harmony of life.
GRAY.

ONE morning while Adelaide was employed in reading aloud to her aunt, a message was delivered to the latter from the Baron, informing her that he should return that day, and requesting she would remain at home to receive a large party

party of his friends whom he had invited to dine with him. This intelligence was not of a nature to afford satisfaction to Madame de Bertonville, her regard having long been alienated from her husband by his conduct; neither was the society of the generality of his associates at all desirable; but she endeavoured to conceal these sentiments from the observation of Adelaide, and after some deliberation, determined to comply with his request.

Adelaide, whose natural timidity had been increased by her having hitherto been so little accustomed to the society of strangers, would gladly therefore have spent the remainder of this day in her apartment; but having in vain solicited

licited her aunt to allow her this indulgence, she was at length compelled to retire with Catherine, Madame de Bertonville's favorite attendant, to prepare for the much dreaded introduction to the Baron and his friends.

Although, during the short time she remained at her toilette, Adelaide felt but little disposed to enter into conversation with Catherine, yet the girl seemed so solicitous to please her, and her countenance was so strongly expressive of good humour, that Adelaide insensibly forgot the penance she was to endure in being introduced to the Baron, in listening to the account and description of him, which Catherine

was

was delighted at being at length allowed to give.

" Apparemment, Ma'amselle, you have never seen Monsieur le Baron," said she, " since you have never been at home since he married my mistress?"

" You are right," answered Adelaide, " I have not yet had that pleasure."

" Then, Ma'amselle, you will certainly see a very handsome gentleman: a tall, well-made, well-proportioned man, with a very handsome face, and... and... I believe that's all I must say about him, Ma'amselle."

" You

"You have said a great deal in favor of his person," observed Adelaide, whose curiosity was rather excited by this preamble.

"O dear, Ma'amselle! if the Baron was but half as good as he's handsome, all would go on well enough, but that's not the case; and however, 'tis no business of mine, to be sure."

"True," replied Adelaide; "all that I wish to know is, whether my uncle is as pleasing in his manners as my aunt?"

"Why, Ma'amselle, that's just exactly as he takes it into his head," answered Catherine, who while Adelaide spoke had stood with her mouth half open,

in her eagerness to communicate her sentiments; "for, to be sure, Ma'amselle, when first the Baron married my mistress he was as pleasant a gentleman as ever any one would wish to see; and so he can make himself still when he chooses it; and while you are a stranger, Ma'amselle, I dare say he'll be civil enough to you; but if you did but know what things I've heard of him, Ma'amselle, it would make your hair stand quite an end; and besides all this, such great sums of money as he loses every night at the gaming houses and clubs, you would hardly believe it possible; indeed, if I had not heard it myself from very good authority, I should hardly think it possible; but the Baron's valet, a very good sort of

young

young man, told it to me; and then, to be sure, when my mistress won't give him as much money as he wants to pay all these pretty debts, he abuses her in such a shocking manner, it's quite dreadful to hear him; but I believe I ought not to tell you all this, Ma'amselle, for Mr. Dubois charged me very particularly not to tell any body; however, I am sure you won't tell it again, though, as for the matter of saying the Baron abuses my mistress, why I've heard him myself, and so have Therese, and Julie, and Jacqueline, and every one of the servants; for I am sure, when the Baron begins quarrelling, he talks so loud, that I can hear them sometimes without listening."

"As to what is spoken aloud," answered Adelaide, who could hardly forbear smiling at the latter part of this speech, although concerned at hearing so unfavorable an account of the Baron, "my uncle cannot expect it will be kept secret; but as to what Dubois may tell you, I would advise you, Catherine, to keep it to yourself in future; as should it ever reach the Baron through your imprudence, you would both probably have reason to repent your indiscretion."

As she said this, Madame de Bertonville entered the room and sat with her until her dress was complete; when she expressed herself highly pleased with her appearance, and, accompanied

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by Catherine, withdrew to adjust her own dress.

The communications of Catherine respecting the Baron did not tend to diminish the reluctance of Adelaide to appear at the dinner table; but as Madame de Bertonville appeared rather displeased at the request she had made in the morning to be permitted to remain in her own apartment, she determined to endeavour to conquer it; and in order to pass the intervening time as agreeably as was in her power, she seated herself at her writing desk to answer the letter of her dear Lady Abbess.

She was thus employed, and her

thoughts deeply engaged, when Catherine entered with a message from Madame de Bertonville, desiring her attendance; on receiving which, leaving her letter unfinished, she repaired to the saloon.

As she entered it, two carriages drove into the court yard, at the sight of which her spirits faltered, and reading her feelings in her countenance, Madame de Bertonville told her that if she acquitted herself well and endeavoured to conquer her excessive timidity, she should be amply rewarded in the evening.

"By being permitted to retire, I hope, my dear aunt," said she; but Madame de Bertonville had not time for reply, as at that

that instant the folding doors were thrown open, and the Duke de la Roche, the Marquis de Faville, and several other noblemen and gentlemen, were announced and entered the saloon, to all of whom Adelaide was separately introduced, excepting one gentleman whom, by his manner, she judged to be the Baron. In this conjecture she was right, and after the rest of the company were seated, he approached Adelaide, saying, he must take the liberty of introducing himself: "as I find," added he, "that Madame de Bertonville judges it unnecessary to pay her husband that compliment."

"The omission was unintentional," answered Madame de Bertonville, "I had

forgotten that you were not acquainted with my niece."

"May I ask, my dear Madam," said the Duke de la Roche, "where this paragon has been concealed, that until now De Bertonville has not had the happiness of her acquaintance?"

"Mademoiselle de Valmont has but very lately quitted a convent," replied Madame de Bertonville, "and . . .

"Is it possible?" interrupted the Marquis de Faville; "what a pity! what an injustice to the world to deprive it of such an ornament! really, my good friend De Bertonville, I should not

not have suspected you of such an instance of self-denial as you must have practised on this occasion."

"You forget, however, Marquis," replied the Baron, "that this is the first time of my having the honor of seeing the lady in question, and consequently I have not the merit you are disposed to impute to me."

"You knew, nevertheless, that my niece was with me," said Madame de Bertonville, "and your absenting yourself so long from home does not indicate your being very desirous of her acquaintance."

"It was at my particular request,

my dear Madam," said the Duke, "that our friend remained the last two days with us; but had I considered that I was detaining him from such charming society, I should not have been guilty of so much cruelty."

"Your Grace is always polite," said Madame de Bertonville, and presenting him her hand, they descended to the apartment where dinner was served; while, led by the Baron and surrounded by the rest of the party, Adelaide followed in silent confusion at having been made the subject of conversation.

At table, she wished to have placed herself near her aunt, but this was not permitted,

permitted, and she was accordingly seated between the Duke and the Marquis. The former was a man rather advanced in years, who still preserved a handsome person, though the extreme care with which he was dressed, proved that it had cost him some trouble to conceal the ravages of time. His manners were polite, but appeared too artificial to please the artless Adelaide, to whom however he paid the most assiduous attention.

To the Marquis she conceived a still stronger dislike, insomuch that she more than once entered into discourse with the Duke to avoid conversing with him. This nobleman was in appearance many years younger than

the other; but his countenance was pale and haggard, and its expression peculiarly unpleasing. What likewise contributed to increase the aversion for him, which from the first moment she beheld him Adelaide had entertained, was the tone of familiarity he assumed whenever he addressed himself to her, and the very great intimacy which seemed to subsist between him and the Baron, in whose favor the intelligence of the communicative Catherine had not greatly prepossessed her.

To Adelaide, Mr. de Bertonville seldom addressed his conversation; but whenever he did so, there was a constrained civility in his manner, together with an air of haughty reserve, which while

while it strengthened her opinion respecting him, rendered her far more desirous of avoiding than attracting his attention. At length the company rose from table and adjourned to the saloon where they had before assembled; when a piquet and faro party were soon made up, both of which Adelaide declined joining, and while Madame de Bertonville was busied in arranging her table, she availed herself of the opportunity to retire, unobserved to her chamber, glad to escape from the impertinent familiarity of the Marquis de Faville. She had not however continued long alone till she received a message from her aunt, desiring that she would return; and, on entering the saloon, she was surprised to find several other gentlemen

tlemen and ladies assembled, to the greater number of whom Madame de Bertonville introduced her.

The beauty of Adelaide, which was rendered more interesting by the glow of bashfulness that overspread her countenance, soon attracted the attention of all the company; while, wholly unconscious of the admiration she excited, she only felt desirous of avoiding the eager gaze of the Marquis de Faville, who, although seated at the faro table, still followed her with his eyes.

At length the other card tables being arranged, and all the company disposed of at the different games, she was somewhat relieved from her embarrassment, and

and having again declared her inability to play, she now quietly seated herself by the table at which her aunt was engaged, and from whence she had soon the satisfaction of perceiving that the Marquis became too deeply engrossed by his occupation, to admit of his bestowing any longer on her that share of attention which had before so greatly distressed her.

As she listened to the buz of conversation and surveyed the different groups which surrounded her, she felt a mingled emotion of astonishment and pity. The eagerness and anxiety she beheld in their looks called forth the latter sentiment, while the former was excited by the strange infatuation which could occasion

casion so many persons, the young equally with the old, to prefer to other more rational amusements, what to her appeared so trivial and even derogatory to the dignity of the human mind.

These reflections naturally brought to her remembrance the beloved companions and scenes of peaceful tranquillity she had so lately quitted, where she had passed so many happy hours, and where each moment was fully occupied in improving studies, varied by amusements congenial to her taste; while the thought of having quitted them for ever, and the contrast of her present mode of life, touched her heart with the most afflictive sensations.

As

As she sat absorbed in these reflections, she was roused from her reverie by the entrance of more company; she arose, and was offering her seat to a lady who had just entered, when she was surprised by an exclamation of joy from some person behind her and turning quickly round, was received in the embrace her friend Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert.

The delight and happiness she experienced at thus unexpectedly meeting the favorite companion of her youth, can be better imagined than described, and could only be equalled by the feelings of that young lady, who loved her with the affection of a sister.

While

While mutually expressing the pleasure they felt on the occasion, Madame de Bertonville joined them, and asked her niece if she had not performed the promise she had given her of being recompensed for the penance she had performed in appearing at the dinner table contrary to her inclination. Adelaide acknowledged that she had, and tenderly pressing her hand, expressed the grateful sense she had of her goodness in thus studying to give her pleasure. The remainder of the evening appeared very short, and the happiness Adelaide experienced in the company of her friend would have been complete, had it not been for the langour and dejection which, after her first transports of joy at the meeting were subsided, were

very

very visible in the countenance of Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert. This observation pained the affectionate heart of Adelaide, and taking an opportunity, when she imagined they were unobserved by the rest of the company, she softly inquired what could have occasioned the alteration in her appearance. Mademoiselle sighed deeply, and without replying, directed by her eyes the attention of Adelaide toward her mother Madame de St. Auzanbert, who, though at the opposite side of the apartment, appeared to be observing her daughter very narrowly.

Adelaide understood the hint, and changed the discourse, soon after which the company withdrew.

The Baron being engaged to sup with a party of his friends, Adelaide remained alone with Madame de Bertonville, and before they separated for the night, the former remarked to her aunt the great change in the manners and appearance of Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert since her departure from the Ursuline Convent; when Madame de Bertonville informed her, that it was generally attributed to an attachment that subsisted between that young lady and a very amiable and deserving young man, the youngest son of the Viscount de Limours, who had paid his addresses to her soon after she had left the convent; and although his fortune was not large, he was approved of by the parents of Mademoiselle until a few weeks before, when

when the Baron de Jaucourt proposed for her, and being a more advantageous connexion in point of wealth, they did not hesitate on the matter, but forbade the young man the house; and, without paying the smallest attention to the tears and entreaties of their daughter, ordered her to think no more of him, and to receive Monsieur de Jaucourt as her intended husband; "and I fear," continued Madame, "that your young friend leads an unhappy life; for although her father and mother must be sensible how greatly their unnatural conduct has already injured her health, yet I am informed they still continue to urge her to consent; but from the steady resolution she has hitherto maintained, I think there

there is little probability of their succeeding."

This account greatly grieved Adelaide, who ever felt with the most lively sympathy for the distress of others; and the unhappy situation of her friend, thus rendered miserable by those whose duty it was to endeavour to promote her welfare, dwelt on her mind and deprived her of sleep during the greatest part of the night. The following morning she entreated permission of her aunt to invite Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert to spend the day with her, which having obtained, she wrote her a short note and sent it immediately by one of the servants, who soon returned with the intelligence

that

that the family had sat off very early that morning for the country; but that the domestics who were left in the house did not know to which of their estates they were gone. This information extremely surprised both Madame de Bertonville and Adelaide, as neither Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert nor any of her family had mentioned their intention of leaving Paris the preceding evening; and Adelaide felt the disappointment the more forcibly, from having anticipated much pleasure to herself in the society of her friend and in the endeavour to console her under her misfortunes. For several days the recollection of the unhappy situation of Mademoiselle pressed heavily upon her spirits, and the uncertainty she was under

under respecting the place to which she was gone aggravated her uneasiness, as it prevented her from writing to her. Soon however her attention was roused from these reflections by a still more afflicting circumstance, the illness of Madame de Bertonville, who was suddenly seized with a violent fever, and for several days delirious, and pronounced in the most imminent danger. Although the complaint was of an infectious nature, and the physicians endeavoured to dissuade Adelaide from such close attendance, yet she could not be prevailed on to leave her aunt, except to take the rest which was absolutely necessary to enable her to endure the fatigue of attending her. During her confinement, the Baron never went near the apartment of his

his wife, and whenever he saw Adelaide, his inquiries were so cold, and he seemed so little interested in her recovery, that Mademoiselle de Valmont could with difficulty refrain from shewing the indignation she felt at his conduct. At length the disorder came to a crisis, and, contrary to the expectation of every one, took a favorable turn, from which period Madame de Bertonville began daily to amend.

The unremitting attentions of Adelaide, and the sincere and lively joy she expressed on the recovery of her health, endeared her more than ever to her aunt, to whom the unfeeling behaviour of the Baron fully proved the insincerity of his former professions of regard.

This conviction determined Madame de Bertonville to act very differently from what she had formerly intended, and as soon as she was sufficiently recovered, she sent for her attorney, and after having destroyed the will she had made soon after her second marriage, and which she had entrusted to his care, she employed him to draw out a new one, which in the presence of proper witnesses, she signed and again delivered into his charge. In this she bequeathed the whole of her large possessions to Adelaide; a trifling annuity to the Baron, andl egacies to her different domestics alone excepted.

This transaction was managed with the utmost caution and secrecy, and as Madame

Madame did not by any means wish that it should come to the knowledge of her husband, she took the opportunity of his being absent on a particular engagement, which she knew would detain him for three or four days to have the business executed.

Change of air being recommended, as the health of Madame de Bertonville, though very much better, was yet far from being re-established, she at length acceded to the entreaties of Adelaide, and consented to follow the advice of her physician; and as from the very weak state in which she still continued, she was unable to travel to any considerable distance, she determined on going to the Chateau de St. Pierre, a small but

beautiful estate which had been bequeathed to her by her former husband. On being informed of this arrangement, the Baron declared his intention of accompanying her thither, for as the vicinity of the Chateau to Paris would enable him to spend the greatest portion of his time there, the sacrifice would not, in reality, be as great as he wished it to appear; and he imagined that such an effort of complaisance, as accompanying his wife to the country at that early season of the year (as it was then only the end of May), could not fail to ingratiate him very much in her favour, a circumstance he was rather desirous of, being conscious that his behaviour during her illness was not exactly what it ought to have been, and he feared lest the attentions

attentions of Adelaide might induce her to consider her more largely in her will. The possibility of her making such an alteration in her favor as she really had done, never entered his imagination. The unexpected amendment of the health of Madame de Bertonville had indeed been a very severe disappointment to his hopes, having flattered himself with the expectation of soon obtaining the possession of her property, which as he was again deeply involved in debt, would have been a seasonable relief; the mortification therefore he experienced at this unlooked-for frustration of the plans he had formed, was too great to be wholly disguised; and although, whenever he was in company with Madame de Bertonville, he made

innumerable protestations of the joy he felt at her recovery, yet his conduct during her illness had been so unfeeling, and was still at unguarded moments so extremely contradictory to his professions, that even Adelaide, who from the ingenuousness and candour of her own disposition was but little inclined to suspect others of dissimulation, could not entirely credit the sincerity of the sentiment he possessed. At length, on the day appointed, every preparation for her reception having been made at the Chateau de St. Pierre, Madame de Bertonville left Paris for that place, accompanied only by Mademoiselle de Valmont and Catherine; as (what he declared) the "unforeseen," but "indispensable" engagements of the Baron prevented

vented him from setting off the same day; and those of her domestics who had not been sent on before, followed in another carriage.

Though the journey was so short, the distance being only three leagues, yet before she had travelled half way, Madame de Bertonville was so much exhausted, that it was with the utmost difficulty she could proceed; and when at length she reached the Chateau, she was so entirely overcome with the exertion, that she fainted in the arms of her niece, while she was assisting her maid to raise her from the seat.

Trembling with apprehension, Adelaide could scarcely support her; but

 having,

having, with the assistance of the servants, at length succeeded in conveying her into the house, the application of cordials and proper restoratives soon produced the desired effect.

Being, however, extremely alarmed at finding her aunt so much weaker than she had been supposed to be, she ordered one of the domestics to return immediately to Paris, for the physician who had attended Madame de Bertonville during her illness.

On his arrival (which Adelaide had awaited in the utmost anxiety) he desired that his patient might be put to bed and kept perfectly quiet, as repose was what she principally required, and

having

having left his directions with Adelaide, and somewhat calmed her apprehensions, he took his departure, promising to return on the following day.

Adelaide continued to watch by the side of Madame de Bertonville's bed until she had the satisfaction of seeing her in a sound sleep; when she retired to an adjoining chamber, to partake of refreshment and repose, both of which were now become necessary for her, after having left particular injunctions with Catherine to acquaint her whenever her aunt should awaken.

The fatigue of the journey operated as a soporific, and it was not until a late hour the next morning that Madame de Bertonville

tonville awoke, much refreshed though still too weak to quit her apartment, in which, as before, Adelaide continued to bear her company during several succeeding days.

Nearly two months thus elapsed, in the course of which the Baron had only found leisure to spend a few hours at the Chateau de St. Pierre; and although no circumstance occurred to vary the uniformity of her life, yet accustomed to the monotony of cloistered walls, Adelaide considered this rather as a subject for self-congratulation than regret, since her present retirement released her from the restraints of ceremony and the conversation of the Marquis de Faville, who, previous to her quitting Paris, had become

come a constant visitor at the hotel de Bertonville. To Madame de Bertonville, whose health began daily to amend, the tender attentions of her niece amply compensated for the want of other society; but while on her own account, she no longer lamented it, for the sake of Adelaide, she wished it otherwise; she wished to atone by every means in her power for her former neglect; and although she had now every reason to hope that her health would soon be perfectly re-established, she could not divest herself of anxiety when she considered that should it prove otherwise, the only protector who would then remain for Adelaide would be the Baron!

CHAP. VII.

—" O! you should not rest
Between the elements of air and earth,
But you should pity me."

SHAKSPEARE.

A CICUMSTANCE of an embarrassing nature having occurred during the late residence of the Baron in Paris, which rendered his continuance unpleasant, he suddenly set off from thence for the Chateau de St. Pierre, to the inhabitants of which his arrival was nearly as unwelcome as unexpected, as the length of time

time which had elapsed since the removal of Madame de Bertonville thither, and her being now nearly recovered, destroyed the idea he wished her to entertain, of his regard for her being the sole motive for his journey. It may appear extraordinary, that aware as the Baron was of the impolicy of irritating Madame de Bertonville, he should so long have absented himself, after his declared intention of accompanying her into the country; but the inconsistency of his conduct in this particular affords one of the many instances which too frequently occur of the infatuation attendant on the vice of gaming, and which seems, as it were with a spell of magic, to bind up all the faculties of the soul, and render it insensible to every

consideration, to every tie however sacred, which interferes with the indulgence of this most destructive passion. Thus, though the Baron had in a moment of reflection perceived the necessity of sacrificing to family politics, still days and weeks elapsed without his having obeyed the dictates of his judgment, nor is it probable that he would now have had sufficient resolution to do so, had not the conduct of one of his most intimate associates at a late nocturnal meeting been such as to incur the general censure of the company, and as he could not espouse his cause, since the behaviour of Duclos admitted not of justification, neither did prudence permit Mr. de Bertonville to render him his enemy by openly condemning him; since,

however

however in his heart he despised him, particular circumstances had occurred in which he had found Duclos extremely serviceable; and as such occasions might again require his assistance, this last consideration therefore quickly decided his hitherto wavering resolution, and availing himself of an opportunity to quit the company unobserved by them, he returned home, ordered his carriage, and set off immediately for the Chateau de St. Pierre, whither he arrived, as has already been related, at an early hour in the morning.

By this retreat (to account for which, should it prove necessary to do so, he designed to frame a plausible excuse) the

the Baron hoped equally to shield himself from the enmity of Duclos, and the reproach which would, he imagined, have been extended to himself, had he attempted the vindication of such conduct as Duclos, it appeared, had been guilty of; and as, unless he could refute the charge and sufficiently exculpate himself to be restored to the good opinion of the company, his hot and impatient temper, the Baron was well aware, would not suffer him to remain in Paris, where the story would soon become known, his departure would then relieve Mr. de Bertonville from the disagreeable alternative of either subjecting himself to censure or to the enmity of a person, who, from the nature of the confidence which

which had hitherto subsisted between them, would have the power of fully revenging himself.

Having therefore during his journey to St. Pierre had leisure to consider these circumstances, and the result of his deliberations being a resolution of remaining in the country until such time as the matter should be decided, he also determined to reap every advantage from the occasion, and by his assiduity to Madame de Bertonville endeavour to regain the ascendancy he formerly had over her.

His reception from that lady was not indeed such as could have afforded him much hope of success, had he been less confident

confident of his own powers of persuasion; since his past conduct had fully convinced her of his former insincerity, and the society of her niece now rendered his absence at least a matter of indifference, if not of satisfaction; but the Baron was not of a disposition to be easily intimidated on such occasions, and though her displeasure was very apparent in the deportment of Madame de Bertonville toward him, he nevertheless did not despair of success.

A few days, however, had elapsed, without his having made any progress in regaining her esteem, and the Baron who now less than ever relished retirement, and to whom nothing but receiving and returning the visits of two or three

three gentlemen in the neighbourhood had occurred to vary the heavy hours, began to sigh after the gay scenes he had quitted, when his spirits were revived by the unexpected arrival of the Marquis de Faville, from whom he received the welcome intelligence of the departure of Duclos, who being unable to clear himself from the charges brought forward against him, had, as the Baron surmised, immediately quitted Paris, and was gone no one as yet knew whither.

Being now therefore at liberty to return to the metropolis, the Baron would immediately have availed himself of it, had not an engagement at home interfered with his doing so; but having

without

without much difficulty prevailed on the Marquis to remain at the Chateau de St. Pierre till the following day, he promised then at an early hour to accompany him to Paris.

As Madame de Bertonville was now so much better as to be able to sit in company and preside at her table, Adelaide dared not expect, much as she wished it, that her presence would be dispensed with; and although she might, without a breach of veracity, have pleaded indisposition as a cause for absenting herself from the saloon, since she had not yet recovered from the effects of her attendance during the illness of Madame de Bertonville,

the

the fear of occasioning any uneasiness to her aunt withheld her from doing so. It was, however, some consolation to her to know that other visitors were expected on this day, as she hoped their presence would be a restraint on the Marquis, who, whether he mistook her character, and really sought to ingratiate himself into her good graces, or merely to amuse himself, ceased not to persecute her with compliments the most absurd, and to Adelaide the most offensive.

The hour of dressing at length relieved her from this impertinence, which Madame de Bertonville had vainly endeavoured to check, and under the pretence

tence of being engaged at her toilette, Adelaide remained in her chamber until the arrival of the expected guests, when she was summoned to the saloon and introduced to them by the Baron. One of these strangers was an officer, advanced in years, who wore the croix de mérite, and in whose favor Adelaide (who, like most young people, fancied herself a physiognomist) felt much prepossessed from the respectability of his appearance and the air of benevolence which characterised his countenance.

The other stranger was a young Abbé, whom she could scarcely believe to be such, so little did his manners and conversation appear to her to suit the digni-

ty

ty of that sacred profession; the only members of which whom she had known, being the holy fathers who were admitted in the quality of confessors at the Convent, and whom she had been accustomed to consider with a degree of reverential awe.

After remaining a short time in conversation, which to Adelaide appeared tedious from the mortification she suffered in being compelled to listen to the Marquis, the old officer addressed himself to Madame de Bertonville, requesting that dinner might not be retarded on account of his nephew; "as I fear," added he, "it will not be in his power to wait on you till the evening." On hearing this, the Baron rang the bell to order

der that the table should be served, and when the servant announced its being so, the company descended to the dining room; the Marquis having seized the reluctant hand of Adelaide to conduct her and placed himself by her side at the table, at which they had not long been seated before the door opened, and a young man entered, who from the glow which overspread his countenance, and the dishevelled state of his hair, appeared to have rode with great speed. After apologizing to the Baron for being so late and for the disorder of his dress, he was introduced to Adelaide as the Chevalier de Bellecourt, and seated at the end of the table. Adelaide felt now more than ever provoked at the disagreeable behaviour of the Marquis, who, though he could

could not fail to perceive how much it distressed her, still continued to address his conversation to her in a sort of half whisper, which was, however, sufficiently audible to be heard by all the company; what tended also to increase her embarrassment was, that whenever she raised her eyes, they met those of the Chevalier, who was seated nearly opposite to her, and who from the air of familiarity which the Marquis assumed in speaking to her, she imagined would suppose she was pleased with, and encouraged his behaviour, which from that idea became more than ever insupportable to her. Her patience being completely exhausted, and finding that the disdainful silence in which she had

for some time persevered, did not appear to discourage him, she at length told him, sufficiently loud to be heard by every one present, that if he imagined such discourse agreeable to her, he was extremely mistaken, since it was quite the reverse. At this speech, for which he was not prepared, the Marquis looked rather disconcerted, and the Baron displeased; while the elder Mr. de Bellecourt, the dignified respectability of whose appearance had impressed Adelaide with so favorable an opinion of him, said that he had admired Mademoiselle de Valmont from the first moment he had had the honor of being in her company, but that the speech she had just addressed to the Marquis, raised his admiration still higher, as it proved her

to

to be not only possessed of much beauty, but also of a great share of good sense.

On finding that she had thus attracted the attention of all the company, Adelaide was covered with blushes, and as she bowed in acknowledgment to the old gentleman for his encomium, her eyes again met those of the Chevalier, and she fancied she perceived in his countenance an air of satisfaction, which she could not help wishing might have arisen from the conversation that had just passed. During the time they continued at table, he spoke little, but that little was strongly expressive of a good understanding and delicacy of sentiment. His person was

graceful and his countenance noble, animated, and ingenuous, to which exterior advantages he united the most elegant manners.

As soon as the company rose from table, Adelaide withdrew with Madame de Bertonville to the chamber of the latter, who felt herself rather indisposed; but being at length somewhat better, they returned to the gentlemen who were now assembled in the saloon, and all, excepting the two Mr. de Bellecourts, (the younger of whom was absent,) engaged at a party of piquet. On the entrance of the ladies Mr. de Bellecourt quitted his seat by the card table and placed himself between them, and after having expressed to Madame de

Bertonville the regret he had felt for her late illness, which had deprived him till now of the honor of paying his respects to her, he entered into a conversation on different subjects with Madame de Bertonville and Adelaide, in which he and the latter were mutually pleased with each other.

Whenever the door opened, Adelaide raised her eyes in expectation of seeing the young Chevalier, but he did not appear. At length she learned from the discourse of his uncle, that he had left them soon after she had quitted the saloon, in consequence of an order to join his regiment immediately, which he had received that morning, and that it was the necessary preparations for his departure

in the evening that had prevented him from arriving at the hour of dinner. At this information, Adelaide felt an emotion of mingled surprise and disappointment, which at the same time she thought was more than the occasion could justify; and after having continued the conversation a few minutes longer, she took leave of Mr. de Bellecourt, and retired with Madame De Bertonville, with whom she remained until they separated for the night.

On entering her chamber, Adelaide opened the book which she had been reading to her aunt, and not feeling any inclination to sleep, sat down with an intention of perusing it ; but her thoughts wandered from the subject, and she soon threw it aside. Notwithstanding

standing the effort she had made to fix her attention to her book, the image of the young Chevalier presented itself perpetually to her imagination, and she could not entirely divest herself of the degree of regret and disappointment she had felt at his absence, which however, she was persuaded, arose merely from a desire of knowing whether his conversation was as agreeable as his manners and appearance were prepossessing. The unhappy situation of her friend Mademoiselle de St. Auzanbert now recurred to her thoughts, and she determined to seize the first opportunity which might offer of making inquiries concerning her. Fully occupied by these reflections, she sat pensively leaning on the table, till at length she was roused by the

clock striking two, when she retired to her bed, where she continued in her slumbers the same train of thoughts which had engrossed her mind when awake, only with the usual inconsistency of dreams. The following morning, on entering the chamber of Madame de Bertonville, at the hour she was accustomed to do so, Adelaide was greatly distressed at hearing that her aunt had been taken extremely ill during the night, and though now somewhat better, still continued much indisposed: however sensible of the kindness which had actuated Madame de Bertonville (who, through consideration for her niece, would not suffer her to be informed of her illness, nor disturbed until her usual hour of rising), Adelaide the more lamented

mented this circumstance, as she found that no medical assistance had as yet been sent for. The darknesss of the chamber, of which the window-shutters were nearly all closed, had prevented her, on the first entrance from the broad glare of day, from perceiving the alteration which had taken place in the countenance of Madame de Bertonville since the preceding day; but as Adelaide now anxiously surveyed her, she too plainly perceived it; and, greatly shocked, it was with difficulty that she could sufficiently command her feelings to conceal her emotions from the observation of her aunt, and restrain her tears until she had quitted the chamber and returned to her own, where as Madame de Bertonville seemed inclined to sleep,

 and

and had desired to be left alone, she continued for some time to await in anxious expectation the arrival of the physician, for whom she had sent off an express to Paris.

She could not, however, long remain absent from the anti-chamber of Madame, where she had left Catherine to be in readiness to attend her mistress, and with whom Adelaide wished to have some conversation as to the illness of Madame de Bertonville; but returning thither, they discoursed together in a low voice concerning it, until a bell being rang in the chamber of Madame de Bertonville, announced her having awakened, when, followed by Catherine, Adelaide entered, and had the satisfaction of

of finding her aunt considerably refreshed by the short respite from pain which sleep had afforded her; and as Madame de Bertonville, anxious to spare her niece from unavailing uneasiness, affected to be better than she in reality felt herself, Adelaide willingly indulged the belief of her being so; a belief, however, which would not long have retained possession of her imagination, had she suffered herself to investigate its foundation, since she would have found it to proceed more from her own wishes than the conviction of her judgment.

CHAP. VIII.

————Can such things be,
And overcome us like a summer's cloud,
Without our special wonder?
SHAKSPEARE.

NOTWITHSTANDING the appearance of amendment which the earlier part of the day had afforded, the sanguine mind of Adelaide, which had once more yielded to the delusive influence of hope, was as suddenly depressed, when, on the arrival of the physician toward evening, she remarked the earnest attention and disapproving countenance with which he

he viewed his patient, and listened to her replies to his interrogations; for this gentleman having attended Madame de Bertonville during the whole of her late illness, Adelaide was too well acquainted with his character to suspect him for a moment of the cruel policy which sometimes actuates the faculty, and induces them to affect less hope of the recovery of their patients than they in reality entertain, in order to enhance the merit of their cure. Her reliance therefore on his integrity, rather increased than lessened her uneasiness on this occasion, as she knew him to be incapable of trifling with her feelings; and although while he remained in the chamber of Madame de Bertonville, he had said but little, and that that little was expressive of

of a hope of affording relief to his patient by the remedy he presented, yet so much had his look and manner increased the apt fears of Adelaide, that on following him from the chamber of her aunt, in order to learn his real opinion of her, so much did she dread the reply, that she had not the power to inquire it. Perceiving her agitation, the physician however kindly interrupted the silence, and whether he spoke his sentiments, or merely sought to tranquillize the mind of Adelaide, it is certain that what he said to her had, in some degree, this effect; and after a conversation of some length, during which he gave her his directions for the treatment of Madame de Bertonville until his return to Saint Pierre, with a heart somewhat less oppressed,

pressed, Adelaide suffered him to depart, when she returned to the chamber of Madame de Bertonville.

It was not until the morning that after having administered to her her medicines, and watched by the side of her aunt, during the whole night, that Adelaide could be prevailed on to quit the chamber of Madame de Bertonville, whose repeated entreaties at length compelled her to do so; but although she complied with her desire in this particular, she found it impossible in the present state of her spirits to partake of repose, and taking her station at the window, she continued to watch the scene without, as it gradually became visible, and anxiously to await the return

of

of the physician who had promised to visit his patient at an early hour.

It was scarcely more than five o'clock when she had again the comfort of seeing him arrive, and when with trembling steps and a beating heart she again accompanied him to the chamber of her aunt, in whom but little alteration had taken place since she had quitted her, but who since the departure of the physician, had certainly received relief from the remedies he had advised. The result of his visit was therefore an increase of hope to Adelaide and tranquillity to the mind of Madame de Bertonville, who, though the pleasures of this life had no longer power to interest her, yet for the sake of her niece felt,

felt anxious to prolong her own existence. In the evening, the Baron (to whom Adelaide had sent information of the illness of her aunt) arrived at St. Pierre, and as he had no longer apprehensions on his own account, since the disorder under which Madame de Bertonville now laboured, was not of an infectious nature, he spent some time in her apartment, and expressed much anxiety for her recovery.

Several days elapsed without any material alteration having taken place in Madame de Bertonville, during which Adelaide scarcely ever quitted the chamber of her aunt, except to take occasional repose, and the Baron continued to divide his time between St. Pierre

and

and Paris; but at length her unfavorable symptoms began to increase; her appetite failed, and she became so weak, as to be unable to leave her bed for more than two or three hours in the course of the day, notwithstanding all which the physician still flattered her with hopes of recovery; but Adelaide, however ardently she wished to believe him, yet could not deceive herself with regard to the situation of her aunt. The pale and altered looks of Madame de Bertonville spoke too plainly to her feeling heart, and although she endeavoured to conceal the grief she felt at the melancholy prospect of losing so kind a friend, and exerted herself to support the sinking spirits of her aunt, yet whenever she was absent from her apartment,

ment, she could no longer command her emotions, and instead of recruiting her strength by repose, those hours, which her aunt insisted on her leaving her for that purpose, were wholly occupied in yielding to that weight of sorrow, which pressed the heavier on her mind from the efforts she made during the day to conceal it.

Whether the Baron began to despair of re-instating himself in the good opinion of his wife, or that he no longer entertained the fears he formerly had of her making any alteration in the disposal of her property, it is certain that, as Madame de Bertonville grew daily worse, his attentions toward her gradually decreased, and though he still professed

professed much anxiety for her recovery, his visits to St. Pierre became daily less frequent. This neglect did not, however, affect Madame de Bertonville; having been too long accustomed to his indifference to allow any fresh instance of it to disturb her mind. The regard she had once felt for him, had long been totally extinguished by his subsequent conduct, and although from that principle of self love which is innate in the human breast, the neglect of those with whom we are in any degree connected, becomes painful and mortifying to our feelings, yet the poignancy of the sensations we experience, is infinitely lessened, when we think the object no longer worthy of our esteem, and the tender affectionate attentions of Adelaide

laide made her ample amends for whatever uneasiness she might suffer on the Baron's account.

One evening, however, as Adelaide sat by her bedside, Madame de Bertonville mentioned her husband's late neglect of her to her niece, who, anxious to spare her every cause of anxiety, endeavoured to persuade her that it was owing to considerable business that the Baron had lately absented himself from St. Pierre; but Madame de Bertonville could not thus easily be deceived.

"This is not a time for me to dissemble, my dear Adelaide," said she; "and though I freely forgive him, I cannot be insensible of the Baron's behaviour to me,

me, nor will I deny that it has cost me many a wretched moment; but those times are past; my sufferings are nearly at an end; and his, unhappy man! are still to come; for, surely, when I am no more, he will feel remorse for his past conduct; he will indeed have more cause to regret it, than he is at present aware of, and from the violence of his passions, I almost tremble for the consequences of the disappointment which awaits him; but believe me, Adelaide," she continued after a pause, and taking the hand of her niece, " and remember, when you are enabled to comprehend the circumstance to which I now allude, remember that, far from regretting what I have done, I would not for any consideration have acted otherwise; yet

yet though I feel assured that you will strictly comply with what is not merely my wish, but express desire, and which you will learn hereafter, I could also wish that you would not entirely desert him who was my husband; and though his house will no longer be a proper abode for you, still while circumstances may induce you to continue under the same roof with him, it would afford comfort to my last hours, to think that you would endeavor to forget what is past, to reconcile him to himself, and, if possible, dissuade him from continuing his present mode of life."

Adelaide was for many moments incapable of replying; but, at length, in a voice scarcely articulate through excess of

of grief, she assured her aunt of her compliance with this, and whatever other requests she had yet to be informed of. This assurance seemed, as Madame de Bertonville had said, to afford her comfort, and, with a languid smile, she thanked Adelaide, who now endeavored to assume an appearance of composure, but the effort was beyond her ability; and consigning Madame de Bertonville to the care of Catherine, she was compelled to retire to her own apartment, where the tears she shed somewhat assuaged the violence of her grief. On returning to the chamber of Madame de Bertonville, she found her rather revived; but the arrival of the physician dispelled the sort of hope which this had awakened, as she perceived by his countenance

tenance that he thought her aunt considerably worse than when he had left her; and on quitting the chamber, he not only acknowledged that he did so, but advised Adelaide to send without delay for the Baron, who was, as usual, in Paris. The shock which Adelaide felt at this direct presage of her aunt's fate, required all her resolution to enable her to sustain it; but her fortitude seemed to increase with the necessity of exerting it; and, with a strength of mind worthy of imitation, she determined not to yield to her feelings while the power of being serviceable to her aunt still remained for her.

After a night of sounder repose than in her present state could have been ex-

pected, Madame de Bertonville awoke; but believing herself to be near her end, she desired that her confessor (who, with the Baron, had also been sent for) might attend her; and on his entrance Adelaide retired, and left them together. Toward the evening the Baron arrived, and had an interview with his wife; at the close of which, Adelaide was sent for, and committed to his care by Madame de Bertonville, with a solemnity of manner so impressive, that even the Baron could not listen to this sacred charge without emotion.

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